

THE PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY OF  
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

By  
WILLIAM M. WHITE, JR.

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DEDICATION

To Dr. Harry R. Warfel, my teacher,  
and to Ann, my wife.

Life is made up of marble and mud.

-Nathaniel Hawthorne

If it be true that human nature is evil,  
we shall gain nothing by blinking the fact.

-Julian Hawthorne

## PREFACE

It is the aim of this study to select, classify, and interpret those statements from the complete writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne which indicate the novelist's personal philosophy. Even though he did not adhere to a formal philosophy, he did express his opinions often enough and with consistency enough that the pattern of his thought may be ascertained. When the scattered bits of Hawthornian opinion are brought together under a subject classification, and handled chronologically, they present a clear statement of the novelist's orientation to those phases of life which were of permanent interest to him. The pattern thus formed constitutes the mental substance of which the fiction is the end product.

This study shows the development of specific beliefs, the relationship between different sets of beliefs, and some of the subtleties which underlie them. While it is not proposed that the Hawthornian system of thought is of sufficient import to lift the novelist into the realm of great thinkers, I believe that this systematic analysis does establish his thought pattern as intrinsically significant. Indeed, the developed pattern elucidates the key ideas of one of America's major novelists.

The primary material for this study is taken from Hawthorne's published works, his journals, and his letters. The evidence I have used consists of 562 statements, which range in length from a single

short sentence to a passage of several sentences. These selections, which stand out boldly as attempts at interpreting life, usually against the background of an event, a characterization, or a feeling, are sententious, figurative, and decidedly moral. One quality of these statements must be mentioned. They are characteristically orotund, oracular, and universal rather than hesitant, uncertain, or particular. They are the "truths" with which Hawthorne elevates his writings above a merely local significance. In effect, they serve as a distillation of the pure essence of the man.

When explicating several phases of the thought pattern it is necessary to recall pertinent events in Hawthorne's life. It is assumed that the reader is not unfamiliar with these events. Since this study does not purport to be biographical in nature, references to Hawthorne's life are employed only when biography relates quite definitely to the ideas under consideration. These ideas or individual segments of Hawthornian thought are studied as fractions of the broader concepts of which they are a part rather than for their unique interest. Once the novelist's commentary in the various thought areas is assimilated, and once these several areas are taken in combination, the total thought pattern thus brought into being affords an invaluable background for a surer critical understanding of Hawthorne's mind and art.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I can express but imperfectly my indebtedness to the overall directing genius of Dr. Harry R. Warfel. His firm understanding of the "lights and shadows" of Hawthorne's mind was of inestimable aid. His continued encouragement was challenging. To Dr. George D. Bartlett I am similarly grateful. His keen and determined probing of the Hawthornian concepts which I attempted to explore repeatedly brought those concepts into a sharper focus. For the careful readings and suggestions of Dr. Ants Oras, Dr. Robert H. Powers, and Dr. Gordon E. Bigelow I am deeply appreciative. The experience with Hawthorne was in every way made more rich and more delightful by the painstaking and tender tutelage of this group of men.

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## CHAPTER I

### SIN

Sin is prenatal to Hawthorne's world. It is not adopted by him merely as entertaining subject matter for fiction. Neither is the Hawthornian interest in sin a manifestation of an abnormal predilection for the seamier side of human nature, for his interest springs from an intuitive acceptance of what the novelist felt to be an indisputable actuality. Any serious attempt at establishing the system of opinions which underlies Hawthorne's fiction and which constitutes the personal philosophy of the man must immediately accept the omnipresence of sin, for such an acceptance necessarily precedes a critical understanding of the various aspects of life upon which Hawthorne reflected and wrote.

All questionings of the cause of the novelist's interest in sin remain in the conjectural realm, nor do they belie that interest.

Why Hawthorne thus wrote, why the theme of sin so fascinated him, dominating his writings and inspiring his efforts from a moral motivation, is, since no one single trait or definite cause is obviously accountable, is to be charged, I suppose to "temperament."<sup>1</sup>

Hawthorne posited the existence of sin and consistently called it to the foreground, while he never once questioned either the assumption or the reasons behind that assumption. Melville explores sin; Hawthorne states it as a fact of life beyond dispute. Sin's certain power was

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<sup>1</sup>Carlos Kling, "Hawthorne's View of Sin," Personalist, XIII (April 1932), 120.

ever-present to the Hawthorne mind. From that mental awareness it broadened outward into his fiction with an astonishing fullness.

### The Nature of Sin

But what is the nature of sin as Hawthorne viewed it? "In the very depths of every heart there is a tomb and a dungeon, though the lights, the music, and revelry above may cause us to forget their existence, and the buried ones, or prisoners, whom they hide."(1)<sup>2</sup> The certainty of evil is absolute. "There is evil in every human heart, which may remain latent, perhaps, through the whole of life; but circumstances may rouse it to activity."(2) Sin and evil are a natural disposition of man, a coiled serpent awaiting action at the snap of a twig.

Among the old problems of Puritanism the most exalted is sin. Hawthorne had inherited the problem but not the accompanying answers of election, atonement, and irresistible grace. For the study of Hawthorne's mind it is necessary to cut back immediately into the principles of Calvinism, for in rejecting Calvinism as a religion he retained it as the raw material of his intellectual probings. "As Franklin translated into secular terms the moral discipline of New England, so Hawthorne translated into empirical truths the essential doctrines of Calvinism."<sup>3</sup> Hawthorne had broken through the heavy

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<sup>2</sup>Arabic numbers within parentheses refer to the primary sources of this study, that is, the 562 quotations. The citation of their location in Hawthorne literature is in the appendix entitled "Citations of Primary Sources."

<sup>3</sup>Herbert W. Schneider, The Puritan Mind (New York, 1930), p. 256.

Calvinistic tapestry, but he was unable to shake himself free from the encircling strands of its shattered fibers. It is patent from the Hawthornian commentary that the sin-cloud is latent in every heart. Moreover, corrupted mankind is forced to act, and when it acts it sins. "For our nature is not only destitute of all good, but is so fertile in all evils that it cannot remain inactive."<sup>4</sup> Hawthorne's statements rest snugly in Calvinistic teaching.

"What is Guilt? A stain upon the soul."(3) Guilt proceeds inevitably from a sinful act; it is one with sin. Whereas, formally, sin may be understood to imply any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the laws of God, Hawthorne notes in a brief but forceful manner that it is "a stain upon man's soul."

Hawthorne is not displeased to personify sin as the evil mistress to whose call all mankind harkens. "But Sin, alas! is careful of her bond-slaves; they hear her voice, perhaps, at the holiest moment, and are constrained to go whither she summons them."<sup>(4)</sup> Again, he comments on the unlimited quantity and unmanageable quality of the sin present in everyday life.

Perhaps, if we could penetrate Nature's secrets, we could find that what we call weeds are more essential to the well-being of the world than the most precious fruit or grain. This may be doubted, however; for there is an unmistakeable [sic] analogy between these wicked weeds and the bad habits and sinful propensities which have overrun the moral world; and we may as well imagine that there is good in one as in the other.(5)

Cotton Mather voiced the wrath of God in his Magnalia Christi

<sup>4</sup>John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. John Allen (Philadelphia, 1936), I, 275.

Americana, a work not unfamiliar to Hawthorne.<sup>5</sup>

Every sin both original and actual being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, doth, in its own nature, bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and the curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all its miseries spiritual, temporal and eternal.<sup>6</sup>

The novelist's ideas appear in accord with the expressed theological sentiment. "O Judgement Seat, not by the pure in heart wast thou established, nor in the simplicity of nature; but by hard and wrinkled men, and upon the accumulated heap of earthly wrong. Thou art the very symbol of man's perverted state."<sup>(6)</sup>

Sin and evil permit neither balance nor repair in this life.

And be the stern and sad truth spoken, that the breach which guilt has once made into the human soul is never, in this mortal state, repaired. It may be watched and guarded; so that the enemy shall not force his way again into the citadel, and might even, in his subsequent assaults, select some other avenue, in preference to that where he had formerly succeeded. But there is still the ruined wall, and, near it, the stealthy tread of the foe that would win over again his unforgettten triumph.<sup>(7)</sup>

Calvin's statements on the nature of original sin express a similar belief.

Original sin, therefore, appears to be an hereditary pravity and corruption of our nature, diffused through all the parts of the soul, rendering us obnoxious to the Divine wrath, and producing in us those works which the Scripture calls 'works of the flesh.'<sup>7</sup>

Hawthorne, with precedent in Calvinism, and in the great majority of Christian dogmas, meets sin by intensifying its heinous aspects and by

<sup>5</sup>Marion L. Kesselring, Hawthorne's Reading: 1828-1850 (New York, 1949), p. 56.

<sup>6</sup>Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana (Hartford, 1820), II, 162.

<sup>7</sup>Calvin, Institutes, I, 274.

insisting on the irreparable breach in human affections occasioned by an evil action.

"So it ever is, whether thus typified or no, that an evil deed invests itself with the character of doom."(8) Sin, evil, and doom are an unholy synonymous trinity. "What is there so ponderous in evil, that a thumb's bigness of it should outweigh the mass of things not evil which were heaped into the other scale!"(9) Here, in a word, is the one incontestible truth. Hawthorne here as elsewhere exclaims; he neither doubts nor questions. The blot on man's soul may not be eradicated, may not be ignored.

"It must be very tedious to listen, day after day, to the minute and commonplace iniquities of the multitude of penitents, and it cannot be often that these are redeemed by the treasure-trove of a great sin."(10) Rarely, indeed, is Hawthorne in as playful a mood over so serious a subject. Herein lies the grim root of the moralist's humor--that sin is so basic to life that it may occasionally be jested about. Sin is the form giving cause from which life's substance evolves. It is so mixed with the sundry aspects of life that mortal man may function only within its shadows.

Basic to Puritan theology were the doctrines of original sin and human depravity. Christianity tends to offer an outlet for sin with penance, sacrifice, repentance, or by a combination thereof. Hawthorne failed to see a ready and easy exit to the problem; he continued to reflect instead upon the nature of sin, its effect on the individual and the group, and on the subtle and miraculous manner in

which it tempers the whole of life. To the certain knowledge of Hawthorne, the nature of sin is self-evident to all who would look at life unflinchingly. Sin is decidedly more vivid than that which falls before the eye of man, for it is intuitive and, to a degree, experienced by all the senses.

#### Brotherhood in Sin

It is inherent in the very nature of sin that each individual must fall heir to an indistinguishable brotherhood. "Man must not disclaim his brotherhood, even with the guiltiest, since, though his hand be clean, his heart has surely been polluted by the flitting phantoms of iniquity."(11) Hawthorne lashes out occasionally at the holier-than-thou attitude encountered in bigots and hypocrites. "In God's name, which of us miserable sinners does deserve anything?"(12) We are alike sinners before God, for the encircling sweep of sin brings all within her orbit.

No sin is individual and ended in time; rather, it creeps like concentric circles from a splash in the millpond. "It is a terrible thought, that an individual wrong-doing melts into the great mass of human crime, and makes us,—who dreamed only of our own little separate sin,—makes us guilty of the whole."(13) Individual instances have universal reverberations in that each specific enactment of a sinful deed echoes the depravity of the race. "Every crime destroys more Edens than our own!"(14) No human being, however agile, may leap free of the far-reaching splash of sin. Whereas it is scarcely a frolicking and optimistic fraternity, this brotherhood in

sin, sorrow and death, there is every indication that Hawthorne thought it, sad though it be, the only legitimate one.

#### Concealed Sin

One noteworthy aspect of sin is that a scarlet "S" is seldom stamped on the foreheads of mankind. "Nothing is more remarkable than the various deceptions by which guilt conceals itself from the perpetrator's conscience, and oftenest, perhaps, by the splendor of its garments."(15) Attention is again called to the splendid but hollow delusion so frequently referred in Hawthorne's fiction. "Decency and external conscience often produce a far fairer outside than is warranted by the stain within."(16) Sin often wears a fair exterior and is no longer sought out and exposed to shame. Were secret sins to be unmasked, life's thoroughfares would abound in a swarming mass of bearers. It is the nature of sin, however, that it should eat inward instead of being merely an outward burden.

The corrosive nature of sin leads to attempts to hide guilt. Concealment causes hypocrisy, and hypocrisy leads the errant one into the region of shadows. "To the untrue man, the whole universe is false,—it is impalpable,—it shrinks to nothing within his grasp. And he himself, in so far as he shows himself in a false light, becomes a shadow, or, indeed, ceases to exist."(17) Hypocrisy also leads to confusion. "No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself, and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be the true."(18)

Through the ages man has become deft in the art of concealment.

"At no time are people so sedulously careful to keep their trifling appointments, attend to their ordinary occupations, and thus put a commonplace aspect on life, as when conscious of some secret that if suspected would make them look monstrous in the general eye."(19) Both the external, or sociological, and internal, or spiritual-psychological aspects of concealed sin indicate that the majority of human sins are hidden from view, and that this practiced concealment of an acknowledged evil is in the seeds of the race and necessitates a deterioration of the inner man. The assumption is, too, that social intercourse reflects the same unhealthy concealment.

#### The Devil and Evil

Satan is not alive to Hawthorne in the sense that he smells of sulphur and brimstone. He does exist, however, as a metaphor for sin. "The fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man."(20) "Unfathomable to mere mortals is the lore of fiends."(21) "Every human being, when given over to the Devil, is sure to have the wizard mark upon him, in one form or another."(22) It is possible that the novelist adopts the Devil as the convenient and logical symbol for sin and evil, or it is also possible that he conceives of him as pride.<sup>8</sup> Hawthorne frequents shadowy realms in more than one piece of fiction, and it is indeed probable that he had not completely shaken off the world of Increase Mather. "And as there are many tremendous instances confirming the truth hereof, so that of

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<sup>8</sup>Hawthorne presents the Devil as Pride in "Egotism; or, the Bosom Serpent."

Satan's taking bodily possession of men is none of the least."<sup>9</sup>

There are no letter or journal references to the Devil. Indeed, he furnishes Hawthorne's imagination with scant reflective material. Although a flesh and blood Satan does appeal to Hawthorne the romancer—the struggle for a man's soul reaches the height of romance and drama,—he did not attract Hawthorne the man. Hawthorne's mind examined in detail the problems of sin, God, and immortality, and while it held tenaciously to and repeatedly probed these concepts, it cared little for the preacher's Hell with its living Satan. It is not likely that a Hawthorne detached from the threads of formal religion would give much credulity to a Biblical or to a Miltonic Satan. Whether specifically named, or whether referred to as the "fiend," "foe," or "enemy," the devil does play a leading role in several pieces of Hawthorne's fiction. Creative writers work within a limited and somewhat conventional frame of reference, but they need not always believe, for their own part, in the traditional concepts which they express in fiction. It may be doubted whether or not Hawthorne cherished an actual belief in the Devil. Indeed, his lack of reflection on the subject would indicate that he was not interested in the devil, or that he did not believe in him.

#### The Transmission of Sin

Red-haired children are frequently born of red-haired parents. Sin is transmitted from one generation to the next with a greater

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<sup>9</sup>Increase Mather, Remarkable Providences, (London, 1890), p. 120.

certainty. ". . . the weaknesses and defects, the bad passions, the mean tendencies, and the moral diseases which lead to crime are handed down from one generation to another, by a far surer process of transmission than human law has been able to establish in respect to the riches and honors which it seeks to entail upon posterity."(23) Mortality is never allowed a fresh start, for it must awaken always to the burden of the past. "To the thoughtful mind there will be no tinge of superstition in what we figuratively express, by affirming that the ghost of a dead progenitor—perhaps as a portion of his own punishment—is often doomed to become the Evil Genius of his family."(24) Sin, then, may be transmitted through the blood in much the manner of hereditary social diseases. Hawthorne is here stating a rather traditional concept—that is, the sins of the father are visited on the son. The consequence of an evil deed does not cease with the death of its perpetrator, but continues to rankle in generations of offspring.

#### Sin and Purity

Good and bad angels have long been a commonplace in literature. The conflict in which these two entities perpetually engage is seen by Hawthorne in terms of the relationship existing between sin and purity. Purity wears the halo; its touch is miraculous and holy. "With stronger truth be it said, that a devout heart may consecrate a den of thieves, as an evil one may convert a temple to the same."(25) "Thus it is, that, bad as the world is said to have grown, innocence continues to make a paradise around itself, and keep it still unfallen."(26) Purity, Hawthorne fears, is but an early, temporary

alcove in the Gothic structure of life. Although some few persons survive in a white innocence, the great majority are besmeared with the mud of sin.

Hawthorne's conception of man's brotherhood in sin does not permit the innocent to shun the guilty for the sake of maintaining a cloistered virtue.<sup>10</sup>

Who more need the tender succor of the innocent, than wretches stained with guilt! And must a selfish care for the spotlessness of our own garments keep us from pressing the guilty ones close to our hearts, wherein, for the very reason that we are innocent, lies their surest refuge from further ill?<sup>(27)</sup>

Innocence or purity serves as a buffer for iniquity. It is clear enough, however, that man's predisposition to sin is overwhelming, and that purity's pedestal is a tenuous one.

In his vision of purity Hawthorne does allow a brief sunbeam to penetrate life's darkened pattern. In the same breath, however, the writer resigns himself to the inevitable awakening of the pure by the world evil.

It was that dismal certainty of the existence of evil in the world, which, though we may fancy ourselves fully assured of the sad mystery long before, never becomes a portion of our practical belief until it takes substance and reality from the sin of some guide, whom we have deeply trusted and revered, or some friend whom we have dearly loved.<sup>(28)</sup>

Childhood's innocence is destroyed in turn.

It is a very miserable epoch, when the evil necessities of life, in our tortuous world, first get the better of us so far as to compel us to attempt throwing a cloud over our transparency.

<sup>10</sup>Hawthorne would appear to condemn Hilda in The Marble Faun on the grounds that she fails to comfort the guilty Miriam.

Simplicity increases in value the longer we can keep it, and the further we carry it onward into life; the loss of a child's simplicity, in the inevitable lapse of years, causes but a natural sigh or two, because even his mother feared that he could not keep it always. But after a young man has brought it through his childhood, and has still worn it in his bosom, not as an early dew-drop, but as a diamond of pure, white, lustre,—it is a pity to lose it, then.(29)

When speaking of the awakening to evil, Hawthorne gives moral — warning for the necessity of a good life. "Let us reflect, that the highest path is pointed out by the pure Ideal of those who look up to us, and who, if we tread less loftily, may never look so high again."(30) Yet, innocence must learn through direct observation of life the eternal presence of evil.

The young and pure are not apt to find out that miserable truth until it is brought home to them by the guiltiness of some trusted friend. They may have heard much of the evil of the world, and seem to know it, but only as an impalpable theory. In due time, some mortal, whom they reverence too highly, is commissioned by Providence to teach them this direful lesson; he perpetrates a sin; and Adam falls anew, and Paradise, heretofore in unfaded bloom, is lost again, and closed forever, with the fiery swords gleaming at its gates.(31)

Whereas Hawthorne does not question, and shows comparatively little interest in the fact that the pure are inevitably awakened to evil, he shows a permanent interest in the psychological readjustments accompanying that awakening.

"Hence come angels or fiends into our twilight musings, according as we may have peopled them in by-gone years."(32) Here again we recognize the dual possibility of the human personality. Although the "good life," which Hawthorne recognized as a rarity, may prove an effective ballast, nonetheless man's true leanings are toward sin.

The Effects of Sin

If the act of sinning held little interest, the consequences of that act hypnotized Hawthorne's mind. Actual sin normally precedes the opening of a Hawthorne tale, and is more often hinted at than specifically described. The temporary exaltation of sinning, the iron link of a mutual sin, the blunting effect, the subsequent isolation--these, rather than the event itself, stir the inner recesses of Hawthorne's imagination. The nether world of the sinner beckons to the inquisitive author. "Fain would I search out the meaning of words, faintly gasped with intermingled sobs and broken sentences, half audibly spoken between earth and the judgement seat."(33) It is in this tortured realm that much of Hawthorne's best fiction finds its expression.

Actual performance of a sin is a matter of strength and resolution, not of temerity. "Crime is for the iron-nerved, who have their choice either to endure it, or, if it press too hard, to exert their fierce and savage strength for a good purpose, and fling it off at once!"(34) Once the sin has been enacted, the initial resolve subsides rapidly, only to be replaced by a variety of perplexing impulses.

But there is a fatality, a feeling so irresistible and inevitable that it has the force of doom, which almost invariably compels human beings to linger around and haunt, ghostlike, the spot where some great and marked event has given the color to their lifetime; and still the more irresistibly, the darker the tinge that saddens it.(35)

The sinner returns to the scene of his deed--drawn by a magnetic inner compulsion.

Hawthorne pondered the effects of sin as they evidenced themselves in two distinct directions. "For, what other dungeon is so dark as one's own heart! What jailer so inexorable as one's self!"(36) The internal eating, here alluded to, and the social manifestations of sin both provide ample food for an observer psychologically alert.

"For, guilt has its moment of rapture too. The foremost result of a broken law is ever an ecstatic sense of freedom."(37) Once more the matter of a temporary rapture is alluded to. A great sin Hawthorne finds exciting, its effects on human nature dynamic.

Momentary passions are delusive, however.

Yet how tame and wearisome is the impression of all ordinary things in the contrast with such a fact! How sick and tremulous, the next morning, is the spirit that has dared so much only the night before! How icy cold is the heart, when the fervor, the wild ecstasy of passion, has faded away, and sunk down among the dead ashes of the fire that blazed so fiercely, and was fed by the very substance of its life! How faintly does a criminal stagger onward, lacking the impulse of that strong madness that hurried him into guilt, and treacherously deserts him in the midst of it!(38)

"Possibly, moreover, the nice action of the mind is set ajar by any violent shock, as of great misfortune or great crime, so that the finer perceptions may be blurred thenceforth, and the effect be traceable in all the minutest conduct of life."(39) Ordinary life is duller now, for the power of the moment melts immediately and man's sensibilities remain henceforth in a blunted condition.

Beyond all else there is manifest an interest in the isolating ✓ effect of sin.

For it is one of the chief earthly incommodities of some species of misfortune, or of a great crime, that it makes the actor in the one, or the sufferer of the other, an alien in the

world, by interposing a wholly unsympathetic medium betwixt himself and those whom he yearns to meet.(40)

The normal, the good people of society whose company the sinner might wish to enjoy are now beyond reach. The sinner, by virtue of his sin, is alienated from society.

Psychological observations on the effect of sin offer a mottled but striking opportunity for the complex turns of Hawthorne's mind. The over-all impression derived from a study of these observations is a gloomy one, and it may appear to a reader of Hawthorne that this seemingly undue dwelling on sin is abnormal. It is both a blemish and a blessing of the Hawthorne intellect that it held fast to its concepts. Unwillingly it turned an idea loose; by preference it retained and continued to examine each idea from every conceivable angle.

Representative writers of various Christian sects help to substantiate Hawthorne's acceptance of sin. "Let us notice now some of the bad effects that mortal sin produces in the soul. . . . It leaves a hideous stain in the soul, deforms it, and makes it hateful in the sight of heaven. . . . It renders man a slave of sin, and of his evil desires."<sup>11</sup> Catholicism recognizes "the stain upon the soul," and also notes that man is a "slave" to mistress sin.

Calvin, the Presbyterian Creed, the Lutheran Creed, and the Roman Catholic Creed are in basic agreement on the nature of sin.

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<sup>11</sup>J. F.A. Di Bruno, Catholic Belief (New York, 1922), p. 68.

Our perdition therefore proceeds from the sinfulness of our flesh, not from God; it being only a consequence of our degenerating from our primitive condition.<sup>12</sup>

In proportion as God is great and glorious Calvinism recognizes the sin of man to be heinous and fatal.<sup>13</sup>

The Lutheran church has always regarded the doctrine of human depravity as a fundamental article of the Christian System. . . . The doctrine is, moreover, so frequently and forcibly inculcated in the word of God, that no man ought to profess to be a believer in the Scriptures, who denies its truths.<sup>14</sup>

Of original sin, in which we are born, we are not personally guilty with our own personal will, but our nature is guilty by the will of Adam our head, with whom we form one moral body through the human nature which we derive from him.<sup>15</sup>

Man's soul and man's body, his whole nature, are vitiated by original sin. This depravity is an ordained fact of experience behind which Hawthorne does not go. He finds it necessary on traditional, intuitive, and empirical grounds to accept the fact—a fact stated emphatically in the majority of Christian doctrines—without entering into the theological niceties of those doctrines.

#### Unpardonable Sin

Unpardonable sins violate the sacredness of God's temple, the human heart. "Supposing that the power arises from the transfusion of one spirit into another, it seems to me that the sacredness of an individual is violated by it; there would be an intruder into the holy

<sup>12</sup>Calvin, Institutes, I, 277.

<sup>13</sup>Egbert Watson Smith, The Creed of Presbyterians (Richmond, Virginia, 1901), p. 48.

<sup>14</sup>S. S. Schmucker, Lutheran Manual on Scriptural Principles (Philadelphia, 1855), p. 56.

<sup>15</sup>Di Bruno, Catholic Belief, p. 20.

of holies. . . ." (41) A genuine concern with sin appears old-fashioned when set beside the monstrous creations and expectations of twentieth century America. Such a concern is no longer fashionable.<sup>16</sup> Hawthorne was vitally concerned with the sacredness of the heart, the soul, the spirit, the personality.<sup>17</sup> The personalists, a contemporary group represented by B. P. Bowne and Edgar Brightman, present one interesting corollary to Hawthorne's interpretation of the unpardonable sin. "For the personalist, then, the moral will is at the center of personality and hence of religion. Any violation of or disrespect for the moral will is wrong, even if committed in the name of religion."<sup>18</sup> Whereas the personalists deplore an intrusion into the personality by social, political, or theological forces, Hawthorne condemns the violation of one personality by another.

The energizing subject of Hawthorne's art was the subject of all great art; for human life in all its wayward complexity. Sin is not the cardinal subject of Hawthorne's fiction; it is but a keyhole, an approach through which to view life. All writers have an approach to their material; Hawthorne's approach is through sin. It is necessary to emphasize properly the naturalness, the complete assurance with

<sup>16</sup> However, a comparatively recent religious movement in this country designates itself "Christian realism" or "realistic theology." It insists upon the doctrine that man is a sinner. For a discussion, see Mary Frances Thelen, Man as a Sinner (New York, 1946).

<sup>17</sup> Both Ethan Brand and Roger Chillingworth commit the unpardonable sin of violating an individual personality.

<sup>18</sup> H. N. Wieman and B. E. Meland, American Philosophies of Religion (Chicago, 1936), p. 143.

which Hawthorne follows out his approach. Sin is the coloring agent in the Hawthornian vision.

Christian theology places on sin an emphasis which is often strikingly Pauline. Following Saint Paul, Saint Augustine wove at the same loom. Both Calvin and Luther patterned their interpretation of sin on the writings of Saint Paul and Saint Augustine. The Mather dynasty carried forward Calvin's lamentation of man's depravity. Though a child of the liberation, Hawthorne is still of Puritan stock, and, more important, of Puritan instinct. The Hawthorne who is somewhat shocked by the sculpturing of nakedness evidences the same Puritan instinct which could never question the eternal presence of sin. It is only through acknowledging the universality of sin that one may begin to enter the Hawthornian pattern of thought.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DANCE OF LIFE

Hawthorne was an interested observer of the pure and unyielding substance of which the daily course of mortal existence is composed. Life, considered as an entity, is seen to have a specific nature or constitution which is present to a like degree at all times. In the physical process of living, man performs a brief dance whose every step is dictated by this constitution--which, though it is infinitely complex, is definable within limits. The Hawthornian view of life formed itself around intangible elements, yet these elements are presented in a remarkably concrete terminology. It is well to study those basic ingredients which Hawthorne saw in life before attempting to bring man into the developing thought pattern.

Four phases of life upon which the novelist formed a definite set of opinions are: the texture of life, fortune and fate, death, and nature. These components are actualities to be reckoned with, in much the manner that sin was reckoned with, for they too are assumed by the Hawthorne mind to be prenatal. The significance of sin lies in the background of all Hawthornian thought. To assume the existence of sin, for example, is to assume at the same time that the dance of life is scarcely a festal one. Once it is understood what Hawthorne meant by sin and what he meant by the rock-ribbed dance of life--once this concept is seen and felt in all its dark rigidity--then and only then

may a reader comprehend the native trend of Hawthorne's thought.

## 1

## THE TEXTURE OF LIFE: MARBLE AND MUD

The actual texture of life was envisioned by Hawthorne in bold outlines. He manages, from his point of view, to observe, reflect upon, and state succinctly with a scientific deftness and self-certainty this texture wherein the nature of life resides. In essence, the concept is one of marble and mud. Although the texture is not destitute of actual evil, as the Emersonian would see it, neither is it totally devoid of good. It is constituted instead of balanced ingredients which the mind of Hawthorne perceived and commented upon with an ever-increasing clarity.

The Approach

Since the actualities of life are to be faced and fronted rather than avoided, in what manner is man to make his approach?

How much mud and mire, how many pools of unclean water, how many slippery footsteps, and perchance heavy tumbles, might be avoided, if we could but tread six inches above the crust of this world! Physically, we cannot do this; our bodies cannot; but it seems to me that our hearts and minds may keep themselves above moral mud-puddles and other discomforts of the soul's pathway.(h2)

It is a necessity of man's physical nature, the necessity of Adam's flesh, that our bodies are besmeared with the world's mud. Hawthorne advances the possibility, however, that the spirit may dwell above and beyond this actuality. He advances this possibility with some small optimism; yet he is extremely reluctant to state it as a fact of experience. The moral gloom so pronouncedly perceived by Hawthorne ultimately overpowers all. This being the case, the greatest possible

folly in approaching life would be to counterfeit or in any manner add to the inevitable world sorrows.

There are so many unsubstantial sorrows which the necessity of our mortal state begets on idleness, that an observer, casting aside sentiment, is sometimes led to question whether there be any real woe, except absolute physical suffering and the loss of closest friends.(43)

"Is not the world sad enough, in genuine earnest, without making a pastime of mock-sorrows?"(44) Yet there remains a reasonable approach to the predominantly solemn dance which all mortals perform.

"But there is a wisdom that looks grave, and sneers at merriment; and again a deeper wisdom, that stoops to be gay as often as occasion serves, and oftenest avails itself of shallow and trifling grounds of mirth; because, if we wait for more substantial ones, we seldom can be gay at all."(45) Here is the approach which Hawthorne feels to be the only sensible one. Here is a maxim to jot down in the commonplace book, to frame on the wall, though it appears incongruous amidst the practical aphorisms of Franklin and casts an occasional shadow on the sunshiny certainty of an Emersonian dictum. It represents, nonetheless, the Hawthornian approach--one thoroughly consistent with his lifelong opinions.

#### The Compound

Considered in its simplest form, life may be reduced to a formula or compound. This chemical compound is gray, a mixture of the dark with the light. Moreover, it is decidedly a dark gray.

The world is so sad and solemn, that things meant in jest are liable, by an overpowering influence, to become dreadful earnest,--gayly dressed fantasies turning to ghostly and black-clad images

of themselves.(46)

The movement of physical life is persistently walking into increasing darkness. Color, it may be noted, plays an important metaphorical role in Hawthorne's attempt to make vivid his compound.

Life's mixed and intermingled texture is nowhere more clearly pronounced than in this statement:

Nevertheless, if we look through all the heroic fortunes of mankind, we shall find this same entanglement of something mean and trivial with whatever is noblest in joy or sorrow. Life is made up of marble and mud. And, without all the deeper trust in a comprehensive sympathy above us, we might hence be led to suspect the insult of a sneer, as well as an immutigable frown, on the iron countenance of fate. What is called poetic insight is the gift of discerning, in this sphere of strangely mingled elements, the beauty and the majesty which are compelled to assume a garb so sordid.(47)

The compound with which man is forced to contend places limitations upon him which are in every way as exacting as those imposed by the existence of sin. The good, the pure, the beautiful are present, but there is great difficulty in extracting them from the strangely mingled ensemble.

It is difficult for Hawthorne to believe in man's ability to dwell six inches above the earth's surface. Some hasty and thoughtless soul will unfailingly splash the passer-by. "This contrast, or intermingling of tragedy with mirth, happens daily, hourly, momently."(48) "Human destinies look ominous without some perceptible intermixture of the sable or the gray."(49) Constantly, the mind returns to dwell, perhaps reluctantly, on the actual compound.

"Troubles (as I myself have experienced, and many others before me) are a sociable sisterhood; they love to come hand in hand, or

sometimes, even, to come side by side with long looked-for and hoped-for good fortune."(50) The balance is rarely if ever on the side of jollity, for all merges finally into the darkening grayness. "When we find ourselves fading into shadows and unrealities, it seems hardly worth while to be sad, but rather to laugh as gayly as we may, and ask little reason wherefore."(51) Since the transition may neither be stayed nor denied, it is well, once the compound is accepted, to find whatever little pleasure is possible.

Gloom, by its nature, spreads itself readily over the crust of existence.

Unquestionably, a care-stricken mortal has no business abroad, when the rest of mankind are at high carnival; they must either pelt him and absolutely martyr him with jests, and finally bury him beneath the aggregate heap; or else the potency of his darker mood, because the tissue of human life takes a sad dye more readily than a gay one, will quell their holiday humors, like the aspect of a death's-head at a banquet.(52)

Life's laughter is but a hair's breadth from its tears, and frequent tears represent the more permanent state.

For it is thus, that with only an inconsiderable change, the gladdest objects and existences become the saddest; hope fading into disappointment; joy darkening into grief, and festal splendor into funereal duskiness; and all evolving, as their moral, a grim identity between gay things and sorrowful ones. Only give them a little time, and they turn out to be just alike!(53)

Life evolves to sadness.

Here, in his elaboration of the compound, Hawthorne has spoken in terms of dark-light, mirth-tragedy, gaiety-sadness, and marble-mud. Both qualitatively and quantitatively the balance tends toward darkness. While the transcendentalist saw the selfsame world, his balance lay with the light and optimistic. Hawthorne's compound, one

filtered through sin, is certainly the more pessimistic of the two. Yet, despite its awful solemnity, it is fundamentally based on observation and experience.

#### The Ephemeral Quality of Life's Texture

Hawthorne felt the pressures of life keenly; he felt also the fleeting quality of the moment, but he always insisted that man must concentrate on the now rather than the yet to be.

In this world we are things of a moment, and are made to pursue momentary things, with here and there a thought that stretches mistily towards eternity, and perhaps may endure as long. All philosophy that would abstract mankind from the present is no more than words.(54)

Though the marble is inextricably united with mud, still it is imperative that man dwell on earth and speak only of what may be actually known rather than depart the earth in a mystical flight.

"And what are the haughtiest of us but the ephemeral aristocrats of a summer's day?"(55) Man's vainglory is denounced by Hawthorne in the manner of an eighteenth century graveyard poet, and frequently with the same schoolmaster tone.

But, after all, the most fascinating employment is simply to write your name in the sand. Draw the letters gigantic, so that two strides may barely measure them, and three for the long strokes! Cut deep that the record may be permanent! Statesmen and warriors and poets have spent their strength in no better cause than this. It is accomplished? Return then in an hour or two and seek for this mighty record of a name. The sea will have swept over it, even as time rolls its effacing waves over the names of statesmen and warriors and poets. Hark, the surf wave laughs at you!(56)

Occasionally, Hawthorne advances a private commentary on life. These brief glimpses allow the personality of the man to step into and

blend itself with the more theoretical world of ideas. "I, likewise, am greedy of the summer-days for my own sake; the life of man does not contain so many of them that even one can be spared without regret."(57)

#### Observations on the Texture

Now that the approach to life, an awareness of its cold compound, and the ephemeral quality of that compound, are taken into account, what may be deduced from a detailed observation? First of all, the texture does not permit the purely accidental, the meaningless; each incident of life is directly moral. "Thought has always its efficacy, and every striking incident its moral."(58) Although the world is of a solid moral substance in which all has significance, it is, paradoxically enough, a shadow. "Time—where man lives not—what is it but eternity?"(59)

This present life has hardly substance and tangibility enough to be the image of eternity;—the future too soon becomes the present, which, before we can grasp it, looks back upon us as the past;—it must, I think, be only the image of an image. Our next state of existence, we may hope, will be more real—that is to say, it may be only one remove from a reality. But, as yet, we dwell in the shadow cast by Time, which is itself the shadow cast by Eternity.(60)

The physical texture of life is but of the thickness of a spider's web; from a spiritual point of view it is flimsy indeed. Rather than placing Hawthorne in the transcendental stream, these reflections on shadows offer a decidedly moralistic observation on the ephemeral nature of life's texture.

Man dances to an old jig and accomplishes but little.

Possibly some cynic, at once merry and bitter, has desired to signify, in this pantomimic scene, that we mortals, whatever our

business or amusement,—however serious, however trifling,—all dance to one identical tune, and, in spite of our ridiculous activity bring nothing finally to pass.(61)

Hawthorne habitually regarded the immediate effectiveness of any one action or any group of actions with much skepticism. Mud is scarcely so plastic as a reformer might tend to believe. Man must await God's designs, for the texture of life is far too tough to be handled and shaped by mere mortals. The balance has eternally resided with sadness, and there is little indeed that man can effect which will substantially alter the compound.

"But real life never arranges itself exactly like a romance."(62) "Who can tell where happiness may come; or where, though an expected guest, it may never show its face?"(63) Real life does not live happily ever after, for there is a something much greater than man in control. The dark hue of life does not whiten at man's call, but merrily continues in a stubborn and often inexplicable manner.

In lieu of the fast fleeting and, from man's point of view, unmanageable direction of life, Hawthorne marvels that the present should appear so fixed. "How wonderful that this our narrow foothold of the Present should hold its own so constantly, and, while every moment changing, should still be like a rock betwixt the encountering tides of the Past and the infinite To-come!"(64)

The infinitely complex nature of life is at the same time an amazingly simple one. It is preferable to drift with it, enjoy it whenever possible, and nowise attempt to direct it. Man is not the

master of his fate; he is a being who must recognize his own limits, and who must recognize and accept at the same time life's limit--marble and mud. Hawthorne's analysis of life's texture was not, for him, moral speculation, so much as it was a reporting of experienced truths.

## 2

## DEATH

Hawthorne views death primarily as the only certain release from the life compound, and secondarily as a phase of the texture itself. If it were not for death, life would be unbearable. "Curious to imagine what murmurings and discontent would be excited, if any of the great so called calamities of human beings were to be abolished,—as, for instance, death."(65) Much of life is continually in mourning for dead hopes; if there were no release through the purifying aspects of death, life would soon be immersed and ossified in a world-wide mud.

"We sometimes congratulate ourselves at the moment of waking from a troubled dream; it may be so the moment after death."(66) Life is a strife-torn excursion to Hawthorne, a briar patch of countless thorns, whose only sure exit is death. "How invariably, throughout all the forms of life, do we find these intermingled memorials of death!"(67) Death, as it presents itself in everyday life, grays the compound.

In the second sentence of The Scarlet Letter, in a spot prominent enough to forewarn the reader of the novel of the unfolding

drama, and with a marked degree of emphasis, the novelist records that:

The founders of a new colony, whatever Utopia of human virtue and happiness they might originally project, have invariably recognized it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion of the virgin soil as a cemetery, and another portion as the site of a prison.(68)

Throughout his lifetime Hawthorne was something of a haunter of graveyards. He was drawn, perhaps, not so much through morbidity as by the eternal and basic recognition of death tugging at his intellect. Death, moreover, is seen to contain the blessing of rest and completion. It has lost its sting. "The best of us being unfit to die, what an inexpressible absurdity to put the worst to death."(69)

An individual is not significant in the long look.

It may be remarked, however, that of all the events which constitute a person's biography, there is scarcely one—none, certainly, of anything like a similar importance—to which the world so easily reconciles itself as to his death. In most cases and contingencies, the individual is present among us, mixed up with the daily revolution of affairs, and affording a definite point for observation. At his decease, there is only a vacancy, and a momentary eddy,—very small, as compared with the apparent magnitude of the ingurgitated object,—and a bubble or two, ascending out of the black depth and bursting at the surface.(70)

Hawthorne's concern over death has many facets. In a philosophical or religious sense he sees spiritual release and completion; accompanying the event he observes genuine grief and sorrow; finally, subsequent to the event, he notes the psychological impact of death on life.

It is very singular, how the fact of a man's death often seems to give people a truer idea of his character, whether for good or evil, than they have ever possessed while he was living and acting among them. Death is so genuine a fact that it excludes falsehood, or betrays its emptiness; it is a touchstone that proves the gold, and dishonors the baser metal. Could the departed, whoever he may be, return in a week after his decease,

he would almost invariably find himself at a higher or lower point than he had formerly occupied, on the scale of public appreciation.(71)

More in keeping with philosophical interests lies the recognition of a mysterious purifying aspect. "What a trustful guardian of secret matters fire is! What should we do without Fire and Death?"(72)

In the final reckoning, death is viewed in a thoroughly Christian manner.

The dying melt into the great multitude of the Departed as quietly as a drop of water into the ocean, and, it may be, are conscious of no unfamiliarity with their new circumstances, but immediately become aware of an insufferable strangeness in the world which they have quitted. Death has not taken them away, but brought them home.(73)

Here is the sure and shining exit from the grayness of life.

#### Grief and Sorrow

Numerous of Hawthorne's reflections on the effects of death, that is, grief and sorrow, are quite obviously of the graveyard school of thought.

But when we ridicule the triteness of monumental verses, we forget that Sorrow reads far deeper in them than we can, and finds a profound and individual purport in what seems so vague and expressive, unless interpreted by her. She makes the epitaph anew, though the selfsame words may have served for a thousand graves.(74)

It is an old theme of satire, the falsehood and vanity of monumental eulogies; but when affection and sorrow grave the letters with their own painful labor, then we may be sure that they copy from the record on their hearts.(75)

Grief is such a leveller, with its own dignity and its own humility, that the noble and the peasant, the beggar and the monarch, will waive their pretensions to external rank without the officiousness of interference on our part.(76)

Illustrious unfortunates attract a wider sympathy, not because their griefs are more intense, but because, being set on lofty pedestals, they better serve mankind as instances and by-words of calamity.(77)

These commonplace notations are of little intrinsic worth, yet they do show to some degree the sensitive, thoroughly human, and at times almost sentimental nature of the reflective Hawthorne.

Finally, the detached observation of which Hawthorne is extremely capable brings the matter into perspective.

Thus it is that the grief of the passing moment takes upon itself an individuality, and a character of climax, which it is destined to lose after a while, and to fade into the dark gray tissue common to the grave or glad events of many years ago. It is but for a moment, comparatively, that anything looks strange or startling,—a truth that has the bitter and the sweet in it.(78)

There is no reason to suspect an unhealthy delight in death on the part of Hawthorne; there is every reason to suppose that he accepted it, along with sin, as one of the inevitables.

### 3

#### FORTUNE AND FATE

Hawthorne has been accused quite unfairly, by various interpreters, of fatalism and cynicism. Any writer who employs the terms "fortune," "chance," "necessity," "fate," and "providence" runs the risk of being damned as a pagan worshiper of the "Goddess Fortuna." With Hawthorne, however, the matter is entirely a Christian one. Never is he more orthodox than in his concept of the operation of Providence. Whichever of the synonyms for Providence Hawthorne employs, it is always clear from the context of the statement that the precepts of Calvinism are not being violated.

The Nature of Fortune

Fortune is present in and concerned with the affairs of men. "Then might I exemplify how an influence beyond our control lays its strong hand on every deed we do, and weaves its consequences into an iron tissue of necessity."(79) Hawthorne, had he been a theologian rather than a romancer, would have been careful to use the technical term: Providence.

First, then let the readers know that what is called providence describes God, not as idly beholding from heaven the transactions which happen in the world, but as holding the helm of the universe, and regulating all events.<sup>19</sup>

The idea of man as a bit actor in a cosmic drama intrigues Hawthorne, not so much that he is amazed that it is so, but that the absolute truth of the concept is brought home so forcibly in everyday life.

We can be but partially acquainted even with the events which actually influence our course through life, and our final destiny. There are innumerable other events—if such they may be called—which come close upon us, yet pass away without actual results, or even betraying their near approach, by the reflection of any light or shadow across our minds. Could we know all the vicissitudes of our fortunes, life would be too full of hope and fear, exultation or disappointment, to afford us a single hour of true serenity.(80)

It is far better, Hawthorne believes, that man should not be acquainted with his destiny. "Life figures itself to me as a festal or funereal procession. All of us have our places, and are to move onward under the direction of the Chief Marshal."(81) Festal and funereal are but vivid synonyms of the light and the dark, the marble

<sup>19</sup>Calvin, Institutes, I, 222.

and the mud. Man is not a free agent but follows instead a predetermined course. This predetermination tends to make man feel at home in his universe, assures him that the Chief Marshal is in full control, and need nowise lead to fatalism and a gloomy resignation.

Providence is an accomplished wrecker of man's imperfect plans and aspirations.

How often is the case that, when impossibilities have come to pass and dreams have condensed their misty substance into tangible realities, we find ourselves calm, and even coldly self-possessed, amid circumstances which it would have been a delirium of joy or agony to anticipate! Fate delights to thwart us thus. Passion will choose his own time to rush upon the scene, and lingers sluggishly behind when an appropriate adjustment of events would seem to summon his appearance.(82)

Destinal forces, it must be realized, are in complete control. It is a prime characteristic of fortune that she scowls when we need her smile, and smiles when we least expect it. Happiness, like the other niceties of life, is God-sent not man-made.

Happiness, in this world, if it comes at all, comes incidentally. Make it the object of pursuit, and it leads us a wild-goose chase, and is never attained. Follow some other object, and very possibly we may find that we have caught happiness without dreaming of such luck; but, likely enough, it is gone the moment we say to ourselves—"Here it is!"—like the chest of gold that treasure-seekers find.(83)

Hawthorne's remarks on the nature of fortune, taken individually, appear to smack of defeatism.

Chance and change love to deal with men's settled plans, not with their idle vagaries. If we desire unexpected and unimaginable events, we should contrive an iron framework, such as we fancy may compel the future to take one inevitable shape; then comes in the unexpected, and shatters our design in fragments.(84)

It is wisdom not to tempt the plan-wrecker, for mortals can never stay the capricious twists of fortune.

In spite of the seeming waywardness of fortune the tenets of Calvinism offer assurance to the doubter. "All future things being uncertain to us, we hold them in suspense, as though they might happen one way or another. Yet this remains a fixed principle in our hearts, that there will be no event which God has not ordained."<sup>20</sup> Hawthorne is cognizant of the fact that man fails to comprehend this miraculous element in life. "The actual experience of even the most ordinary life is full of events that never explain themselves, either as regards their origin or their tendency."(85) An over-all view is above and beyond man's limited vision.

"No human effort, on a grand scale, has ever yet resulted according to the purpose of its projectors. The advantages are always incidental. Man's accidents are God's purposes. We miss the good we sought, and do the good we little cared for."(86) Here is a basic Hawthorne precept, and admonition. Man desires pure government, reform, or any other good, yet he inevitably fails the quest. "A dragon always waits on everything that is very good."(87) An angel also waits on evil schemes. After a time the two balance each other, but this balance is beyond the boundaries of the individual's view.

#### The Governing Power of Fortune

Fortune's government is a planned religious one in which chaos

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., I, 230.

receives no portion. This rigid concept Hawthorne embraces intuitively and immediately—embraces it with the same lack of astonishment with which he accepts sin. The mind of Hawthorne is complex in that it is highly inquisitive, frequently skeptical of generally accepted truths, normally empirical and imaginative, and nearly always acute to the point of profundity. Yet at the same time it is seldom swayed by cold logic, but believes instead with a childlike unshakeable faith.

"Does it not argue a superintending Providence that, while viewless and unexpected events thrust themselves continually athwart our path, there should still be regularity enough in mortal life to render foresight even partially available?"(88) Hawthorne is not a thoroughgoing Puritan; he holds firmly to certain beliefs which would have made the Mathers shudder. In his basic orientation to life, however, in his forthright promulgation of the doctrines of sin and Providence, he is thoroughly traditional.

God the creator of all things, doth uphold, direct, dispose and govern all creatures, actions and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy Providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free immutable counsel of his own will to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness and mercy.<sup>21</sup>

Omnipotent Providence has taken on the additional duties of assigning tasks and of establishing the basic balance of life.

But when the ethereal portion of a man of genius is obscured, the earthly part assumes an influence the more uncontrollable, because the character is now thrown off the balance to which

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<sup>21</sup>Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, II, 161.

Providence had so nicely adjusted it, and which, in coarser natures, is adjusted by some other method.(89)

So long as we love life for itself, we seldom dread the losing it. When we desire life for the attainment of an object, we recognize the frailty of its texture. But, side by side with this sense of insecurity, there is a vital faith in our invulnerability to the shaft of death while engaged in any task that seems assigned by Providence as the proper thing to do, and which the world would have cause to mourn for should we leave it unaccomplished.(90)

These statements are but outspoken corollaries of a religious faith.

"Providence was the expression of His inner determination, and though the lesson of some 'divine providences' could be read with ease, the teaching of others remained obscure."<sup>22</sup> The voicings of God's decrees, or providence, is a matter of some concern. "It was, indeed, a majestic idea, that the destiny of nations should be revealed, in these awful hieroglyphics, on the cope of heaven. A scroll so wide might not be deemed too expansive for Providence to write a people's doom upon."(91) Perhaps Hawthorne would like to be able to glance at the heavens and read for himself the gigantic assurances of a communicative deity. Although he no longer believes in superstitious omens, he is not as incredulous of the miraculous as many of his contemporaries.

Hawthorne has observed fortune's daily performances in our mundane span. He has, in fact, become the spokesman of its powers and its ways.

Destiny, it may be,—the most skilful of stage-managers,—seldom chooses to arrange its scenes, and carry forward its drama,

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<sup>22</sup>Perry Miller, The New England Mind (New York, 1939), p. 39.

without securing the presence of at least one calm observer. It is his office to give applause when due, and sometimes an inevitable tear, to detect the final fitness of incident to character, and distil in his long-brooding thought the whole morality of the performance.(92)

Through the calm observations, and calm reflections of destiny's observer, Nathaniel Hawthorne, American literature was vastly enriched.

The Presbyterian creed offers a formal statement of Providence's administration of the affairs of mankind.

God is Sovereign. He reigns Supreme in fact as well as in the right. The universe to him is not a surprise, a defeat, a failure, but a development of his eternal purpose. That purpose is Predestination. That development is Providence. The one is the all-wise predetermined plan in the mind of God; the other is the all-powerful execution of that plan in the administration of the universe.<sup>23</sup>

The final and ultimately fair balance of Providence is accepted by Hawthorne on faith.

(Yet the ways of Providence are utterly inscrutable; and many a murder has been done, and many an innocent virgin has lifted her white arms, beseeching its aid in her extremity, and all in vain; so that, though Providence is infinitely good and wise,—and perhaps for that very reason,—it may be half an eternity before the great circle of its scheme shall bring us the super-abundant recompense for all these sorrows!(93))

Calvinism, Puritanism, Presbyterianism have frequently been misinterpreted and misquoted on their beliefs in Providence and predestination; have been misunderstood for the same reasons that Hawthorne has been erroneously stamped a fatalist. A statement from the Presbyterian creed may help to rectify this misapprehension.

The doctrine of our Standards is not that "whatever must be,

<sup>23</sup>Smith, The Creed of Presbyterians, p. 157.

must be," but that whatever God has decreed and purposed shall be. The one expression attributes the course of events to a blind mechanical necessity, the other to the intelligent purpose of a personal God. The one is fatalism, the other Foreordination, Predestination, Providence.<sup>24</sup>

There is no attempt to suggest that Hawthorne's mind kept a literal allegiance to the tenets of Calvin. The doctrine of "election" was repugnant to him, and "irresistible grace" scarcely warmed his heart. Hawthorne did observe certain intangibles—sin and fortune—in the daily dance of life. These he saw, these he understood, these he never shook off. The essential problem of Calvinism, man as a sinner, and the majestic destinal force, Providence, play principal roles in Hawthorne's personal philosophy.

H. W. Schneider states the truth of the matter most effectively:

Needless to say, Hawthorne used the theological terminology metaphorically. He did not need to believe in Puritanism, for he understood it. He saw the empirical truth behind the Calvinist symbols. He recovered what Puritans professed but seldom practiced—the spirit of piety, humility and tragedy in the face of the inscrutable ways of God.<sup>25</sup>

Sin and the inscrutable ways of Providence provide the musical accompaniment to which man performs his stately waltz. Hawthorne's final reckoning with these actualities constitutes the complete story of his systematized orientation to life. It is sufficient for the moment to insist that they are the obvious mental framework on which all future speculation must be hung.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>25</sup>Schneider, The Puritan Mind, p. 262.

## NATURE

A fourth and final component of the dance of life, nature, Hawthorne conceived of as poetry, goddess, refuge, and symbol. Essentially, She is viewed as a participating backdrop to life's little dramas. Her role is only slightly subordinate to that of sin and fortune. Although nature is much more than a mechanical externality or mere scenery to Hawthorne, he never saw in Her what Emerson and Thoreau were seeing. She never spoke aloud to him. In Hawthorne's fiction nature plays a very substantial, at times a dynamic and symbolic, role. Nature is never inert matter alone, but in the long view She is, like her interpreter, more of a moralist than a mystic.

As God's Poetry

"It is strange what humble offices may be performed in a beautiful scene without destroying its poetry."(94) "It is strange what prosaic lines men thrust in amid the poetry of nature. . . ." (95) There is no indication of an artistic deafness to the melodious rhythms of nature. Man, in contrast, is viewed, more often than not, as a black blemish to the beauty of the natural scene. Had Hawthorne continued to write poetry after his seventeenth year,<sup>26</sup> he would scarcely have developed into a nature poet in the Wordsworthian sense.

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<sup>26</sup>Hawthorne's early attempts at nature poetry show little promise. For a reprint of the poems see: Elizabeth L. Chandler, editor, "Hawthorne's Spectator," New England Quarterly, IV (April 1931), 288-330.

For Hawthorne saw in nature a moral force which blends with, sometimes echoes, and sometimes shapes the texture of life. Nature is but an ingredient of a greater compound; her poetry is thereby provocative but hardly rhapsodic.

#### As a Goddess

"The reason of the minute superiority of Nature's work over man's is, that the former works from the innermost germ, while the latter works merely superficially."(96) Nature is wedded in a mysterious manner to fortune; she is a Goddess moving forward from spiritual origins in a predetermined manner. She is not to be identified with Providence, for She is a more immediate and warmer administrator of the affairs of man.

It was the fatal flaw of humanity which Nature, in one shape or another, stamps ineffectually on all her productions, either to imply that they are temporary and finite, or that their perfection must be wrought by toil and pain.(97)

"Nature sometimes displays a little tenderness for our vanity, but is never careful for our pride. She is willing that we should look foolish in the eyes of others; but keeps our little nonsensicalities from ourselves."(98) Nature may be seen, then, to have something of the warmth and personality of a Goddess. Man is but a child to be cuddled or scolded.

Behind this warmth, in sharp relief to the implied tenderness, lies the more deliberate wantonness of nature.

Nothing comes amiss to Nature—all is fish that come to her net. If there be a living form of perfect beauty instinct with soul—why, it is all very well, and suits Nature well enough. But she would just as lief have that same beautiful, soul-illuminated body, to make worm's meat of, and to manure the earth with.(99)

In this instance, She is the fickle goddess, Fortuna, in all her pagan trimmings.

How Nature seems to love us! And how readily, nevertheless, without a sigh or a complaint, she converts us to a meaner purpose, when her highest one—that of a conscious intellectual life and sensibility—has been untimely balked!(100)

More often than not, nature, charged with planting various seeds in man, is seen as a second gardener to fortune. "How strange, how strange it is, this deep, wild passion that nature has implanted in us to be the death of our fellow-creatures, and which coexists at the same time with horror!"(101) Nature, though more immediate than fortune, is at times identified with her. She is, in fact, in one of her aspects, a personal executer of the divine will. Hawthorne does not deify nature, nor does he pledge himself to her mysterious messages, for he reads her as a moral rather than an emotional divine scroll.

#### Nature as Refuge

Hawthorne, more than most men, seems to have felt the cross and crude pressures encountered in earning a living. In his youth he had romped in the Maine woods with notorious happiness. In young manhood he took long walks into nature and was fond of ice skating. In his maturity and in his autumnal years he continued the habit of nature walks with close friends. He died while on an excursion with Pierce. Ralph Waldo Emerson had attended Hawthorne on more than one walking tour; it was perhaps all they had in common, this love for walking.

The sailor blood in Hawthorne was never happy far inland, for he found in the coastal wilds and the ocean's roar an escape, a relief from civilized pressures. "Oh that Providence would build me the merest little shanty, and mark me out a rood or two of garden-ground, near the sea-coast."(102) Salem and Liverpool were seaports, whereas Concord was too far inland for the descendant of Captain Nathaniel Hathorne, "Bold" Daniel Hathorne, and other sea-going men.

Nature affords an uncorrupted retreat from "the perverted ingenuity of the race." Especially in the autumn is she apt to coddle those who come unto her.

If my readers should decide to give up civilized life, cities, houses, and whatever moral or material enormities in addition to these the perverted ingenuity of our race has contrived, let it be in the early autumn. Then Nature will love him better than at any other season, and will take him to her bosom with a more motherly tenderness.(103)

It was to nature that Hawthorne was wont to go when life's pressures tormented.

But perhaps it is necessary for the health of the human mind and heart that there should be a possibility of taking refuge in what is wild, and uncontaminated by any culture; and so it has been ordained that science shall never alter the aspect of the sky, whether stern, angry, or beneficent, nor of the awful sea, either in calm or tempest, nor of these rude Highlands.(104)

#### Nature as Symbol

Finally there exists in the renewing aspect of nature a symbol of the purification-rebirth cycle of life. "Will the world ever be so decayed that spring may not renew its greenness? Can man be so dismally age-stricken that no faintest sunshine of his youth may revisit him once a year? It is impossible."(105) Each spring

brings life out of death with an endless yet eternally beautiful regularity.

By and large the symbolism of nature is unreadable to the intellect. "When God expressed himself in the landscape to mankind, He did not intend that it should be translated into any tongue save his own immediate one."(106) Her beauty may be felt in the heart but never fully comprehended. She is the painting of an artistically adept God, a hieroglyph which man may neither uncover or emulate with any degree of success.

Hawthorne's symbolical nature is one of varying aspects. "One touch of Nature makes not only the whole world, but all time, akin."(107) Nature is gigantic and beautiful, a manifestation of God's plan, but, above all, a moral force in the life of man. She is the catalyst for the compound of life, although she frequently enters that compound.

Life as an entity, apart from the people who live it, has stamped itself in bold relief on the mind of Hawthorne. Life's texture is one which may be felt between the fingers, stretched and probed, yet it always reverts to the same pattern. Hawthorne is not repelled by the harshness of that pattern. Death, for example, is taken as an integral aspect of life. It is everywhere present as a solemn reminder of mortality, yet Hawthorne views it as a great awakening—an awakening far greater than the one associated with Jonathan Edwards. Fate, Fortune, Chance, Destiny, Necessity, Providence and Nature are fused in Hawthorne's observation into the dynamic, yet unfathomable, directional forces hovering above life's

surfaces. They are seen by the "calm observer" as detached yet meaningful hieroglyphs, if one can read them, of God's divine plan.

Puritan existence was a predetermined one—one in which man relinquished God's matters to God and went zestfully to fulfill his own obligations. Few systems emphasizing the free will of man have evidenced a like vitality. The Puritan dance of life is essentially the one which Hawthorne observed. It is solemn, rigid, and a bit forbidding. At the same time it is the dance of assurance in an ordered universe. Though there are few strains of light and airy music, neither is there the staccato of hesitation. It is the Puritan's world; it is God's world; it is Hawthorne's world. It is a world tutored by morality. It moves to the pipings of sin, for flesh is sinful, but occasionally it looks upward from the dark texture of physical life to the brighter texture of a spiritual one.

## CHAPTER III

### SENSITIVITY AND SOLITUDE

If there is one personal and at the same time social problem which confounded Hawthorne time and again it is to be discovered in that necessity which forces a sensitive person to find solace in an insensitive world. The romantic, misleading account of Hawthorne's life between 1825 and 1837, one depicting a sensitive and secluded artist in a dismal chamber, has been justifiably amended by more recent biographers.<sup>27</sup> Yet Hawthorne was basically both a sensitive and a solitary soul. Had it not been for the pressures exerted by Sophia, Nathaniel would have been eagerly content to dwell a little apart socially. Following his marriage on July 9, 1842, and the subsequent political appointments which befell him, it became mandatory that the reluctant author assume social burdens in an institutionalized society. Once he entered the outer world, especially during the Liverpool years, he became more accustomed to the social role which all men must play to some degree. The Hawthorne of 1855 shouldered with some ease social obligations which would have set the Hawthorne of 1835 all atremble.

In one sense of the word, Hawthorne entered late into society, although he had never been so far out of it as early biographers were prone to believe; yet in a more abstract sense he never entered at all.

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<sup>27</sup> Robert Cantwell, Nathaniel Hawthorne: The American Years (New York, 1948), p. viii ff.

He was essentially a family man, a warm friend to not over a half dozen people. "Hawthorne was never a very social person, in the sense that he liked to have a lot of people around him. This was due, in all probability, not only to the circumstances of his childhood, but to his own nature as well."<sup>28</sup>

Prior to 1842 Hawthorne preferred an individual form of seclusion, which became after 1842 a kind of domestic seclusion, from social fanfare. He, like Jonathan Swift, enjoyed the individual but not the group. Yet in the midst of his personal struggle with the problem of society he was internally possessed of two basic ideas: first, man is essentially alone in the world in that he can never break through the invisible barrier to his fellow man; and, second, the world will not let a man alone but eternally insists that he participate in its affairs as a social being. Intimately related with these beliefs are the problems which they father: the solitary soul who is doomed to the cold outer fringe of society, and the sensitive soul whose cross of living lies unbearably heavy upon him.

#### The Sensitive Soul

The notion of a soul too sensitive to endure the harsh strictures of life is a central one to the Hawthorne philosophy. It persists in the fiction, journals, and letters. If there are but two types of man, the sensitive and the insensitive, the former is invariably trampled upon by the latter. Life's burdens overwhelm the

<sup>28</sup>Manning Hawthorne, "Hawthorne's Early Years," Essex Institute Historical Collections, LXXIV (1938), 11.

sensitive being; the group becomes a vicious animal; he desires above all things to be left alone, to withdraw from the clamor of a busy and unconcerned world. "Mercy on us, what a noisy world we quiet people live in!"(108) Playfully but with a certain seriousness, the reader is made aware of that gulf existing between a quiet inner world and a boisterous external one.

"But there are natures too indolent, or too sensitive, to endure the dust, the sunshine, or the rain, the turmoil of moral and physical elements, to which all the wayfarers of the world expose themselves."(109) It is tragic that there are beings, often with imaginative and fertile minds, who are constantly impaled upon the indifferences and open hostility of the external world. Hawthorne was enough of a sensitive soul in his own right to feel the wounds keenly. The readiest way out is to create an internal world, a world, however, which proves a dangerous substitute. "A dreamer may dwell so long among fantasies, that the things without him will seem as unreal as those within."(110)

Hawthorne's sensitivity was far removed from that of a mild-mannered Casper Milquetoast. He enjoyed good cigars, good liqueurs, and good company as much as any man, nor was he blind to the charms of the fairer sex. At the same time he was quite hesitant about intruding on people. "It is very painful to me to disturb and derange anybody in the world."(111) Although frequently imposed upon by others,<sup>29</sup> Hawthorne was instinctively retiring, and somewhat reluctant

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<sup>29</sup>Throughout the notebooks there is ample evidence that

to ask a favor.

A sensitive person may withdraw from life as much as possible, he may play leech to a stronger personality, or he may relinquish the struggle altogether.

In moods of heavy despondency, one feels as if it would be delightful to sink down in some quiet spot, and lie there forever, letting the soil gradually accumulate and form a little hillock over us, and the grass and perhaps flowers gather over it. At such times, death is too much of an event to be wished for;—we have not spirits to encounter it; but choose to pass out of existence in this sluggish way.(112)

The easily wounded person is hard pressed to find the wherewithal to resist the blunting effect of life.

There are chaotic, blind, or drunken moments, in the lives of persons who lack real force of character,—moments of test, in which courage would most assert itself,—but where these individuals, if left to themselves, stagger aimlessly along, or follow implicitly whatever guidance may befall them, even if it be a child's. No matter how preposterous or insane, a purpose is a God-send to them.(113)

Weak, shy, and sensitive creatures need to rely on the guidance of others, for once they have encountered the "mud of life" they are not again eager to step forward. Self-justifications with which shyness attempts to excuse itself are on shaky grounds.

It is a very genuine admiration, that with which persons too shy or too awkward to take a due part in the bustling world regard the real actors in life's stirring scenes; so genuine, in fact, that the former are usually fain to make it palatable to their self-love, by assuming that these active and forcible qualities are incompatible with others, which they choose to deem higher and more important.(114)

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Hawthorne was frequently imposed on. Beggars found him an easy mark; his friends found him ready to lend money when he had any; several Americans stranded in England borrowed but never repaid return passage money.

Frequently, and this was somewhat the choice of Hawthorne, the sensitive individual contrives an inner world to act as a buffer to the outer, which in turn gradually fades from vision. "I need monotony, too, an eventless exterior life, before I can live in the world within."(115) This inner world is felt to be of greater significance than the artificial structure of social life.

There is little reason to assume that Hawthorne may be legitimately characterized as a sensitive soul. His sensitivity represents but a minor phase of his total personality, and, as is often the case with artists, it tends to lack stability. Other components of his intellectual and emotional make-up are much more sharply defined. Nevertheless, the author's fictionalization of a sensitive soul mirrors one aspect of his inmost self. Sensitivity, as Hawthorne lived it and wrote it, appears as that reaction which the idealistic and introverted person feels when thrust into a materialistic and extroverted world.

#### The Solitary Soul

It is part and parcel of an observer of life that he should be cut off from the humanity subjected to his gaze.

The most desirable mode of existence might be that of a spiritualized Paul Pry, hovering invisible round man and woman, witnessing their deeds, searching into their hearts, borrowing brightness from their felicity and shade from their sorrow, and retaining no emotion peculiar to himself.(116)

The role which Hawthorne proposes, that of a Paul Pry, provides the detached observer with ample material for reflection and fiction, but chills him with a cold and clammy aftermath. While a role of this

type enables an author to supply himself with raw material for his writings, it promotes an unfortunate breach between author and subject.

While solitude is to be feared and avoided as a permanent condition of life, while man's appetite for society is intuitive, still there is an occasional longing for the refreshing calm which solitude affords. "What would a man do, if he were compelled to live always in the sultry heat of society, and could never bathe himself in solitude?"(117)

The ill effects of solitude overbalance its advantages, and the isolated individual, the man cut off by the group or left behind by it, is to be pitied among mortals. "Some old people have a dread of solitude, and when better company may not be had, rejoice even to hear the quiet breathing of a babe, asleep upon the carpet."(118) Solitude is to be dreaded above all other waters in which a man may drown himself. Perspective grows into a distorted ideal.

It is not good for man to cherish a solitary ambition. Unless there be those around him by whose example he may regulate himself, his thoughts, desires, and hopes will become extravagant, and be the semblance, perhaps the reality of a madman.(119)

In a letter to Longfellow in 1837, Hawthorne referred to his so-called solitary period and stated the problem of one who has cut the warm ties of humanity and drifted into bleak isolation.

You tell me that you have met with troubles and changes. I know not what they may have been; but I can assure you that trouble is the next best thing to enjoyment, and that there is no fate in the world so horrible as to have no share in either its joys or its sorrows.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Samuel Longfellow, Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (Boston, 1891), I, 264.

There were no great sorrows plaguing Hawthorne's twelve years of literary apprenticeship, neither were there the pleasures of love and success. Perhaps the novelist's romantic self-estimate is overly dramatic. Assuredly, though, it has some basis in fact.

At the very moment when Hawthorne felt himself to be in isolation he longed for the crowd. His acceptance of solitude both as a personal problem and as a concern of mankind recognized that a reluctant fear of the crowd must eventually give way before the greater evils of solitude. He was continually forced to battle a nature which yearned for seclusion and the freedom to think and dream and feel.<sup>31</sup>

By the time of his marriage, Hawthorne had come to look upon the solitude of his early years as a loathsome disease. Henceforth he conceives of the solitary way in the blackest of terms. "In a forest, solitude would be life; in a city, it is death."(120)

Herein lies the strongest statement of an ill-starred course: "The worst possible fate would be to remain behind, shivering in the solitude of time, while all the world is on the move towards eternity."(121) "To persons whose pursuits are insulated from the common business of life—who are either in advance of mankind or apart from it—there often comes a sensation of moral cold that makes the spirit shiver as if it had reached the frozen solitudes around the pole."(122) Physical separation does not enter into the Hawthorne

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<sup>31</sup>Nathaniel Hawthorne, Love Letters of Nathaniel Hawthorne, preface by Roswell Field (Chicago, 1907), I, 213.

concept; he speaks rather of a complete mental and emotional alienation from one's fellow beings. The outcast desires nothing more than a return to the human fold. "Persons who have wandered, or been expelled, out of the common track of things, even were it for a better system, desire nothing so much as to be led back. They shiver in their loneliness; be it on a mountain-top or in a dungeon."(123)

Repeatedly, Hawthorne refers to that dreary region of isolation as being one of a physical and mental coldness. Society is the heat; solitude the ice of life.

Generosity is a very fine thing, at a proper time and within due limits. But it is an insufferable bore to see one man engrossing every thought of all the women, and leaving his friend to shiver in outer seclusion, without even the alternative of solacing himself with what the more fortunate individual has rejected.(124)

Even when recording sentiments of this kind on the lighter side of the ledger, Hawthorne evinces an abounding sympathy for those who are by-passed by life.

Seclusion, the state of being utterly alone with one's self, rapidly grows insufferable.

A secluded man often grasps at any opportunity of communicating with his kind, when it is casually offered to him, and for the nonce is surprisingly familiar, running out towards his chance-companion with the gush of a dammed-up torrent, suddenly unlocked.(125)

Especially in the more extreme moments of life does the insufficient solitude of self seek out the common herd for solace.

In circumstances of profound feeling and passion, there is often a sense that too great a seclusion can not be endured; there is an indefinite dread of being quite alone with the object of our deepest interest. The species of solitude that a crowd harbors

within itself is felt to be preferable, in certain conditions of the heart, to the remoteness of a desert or the depths of an untrodden wood. Hatred, love, or whatever kind of too intense emotion, or even indifference, where emotion has once been, instinctively seeks to interpose some barrier between itself and the corresponding passion in another breast.(126)

Hawthorne's chief concern is with the individual who has been shut off by mankind, or with the one who, by virtue of his own nature, in the midst of companions is unable to break the barrier between personalities. The man who is alone when in a crowd, alone when with friends or family, is the true solitary figure. Thomas Wolfe, some sixty-five years after Hawthorne's death, began to write long and earnest novels dealing in part with that invisible barrier separating man from man. He too felt keenly that solitude, in its more abstract sense, is a permanent state of man. Hawthorne, although he recognizes man as a social being, continues to believe that the cocoon of self surrounding the individual, however transparent it may appear, is scarcely penetrable.

Sensitivity and solitude are phases of personality rather than a primal element of life. Whereas sin and the dance of life are empirical essences present prior to the emergence of the individual, the sensitive and solitary man reflects one aspect of that emergence. It is on the reluctantly emerging individual that the prenatal realities and institutional influences of life cut their deepest mark. He is the eternally exposed, nerve-filled figure which Hawthorne pushes back and forth in his mind with curiosity and with sympathy.

Hawthorne is fully aware that all men are not as delicately

constituted as the unfortunates which he envisions. At the other end of the scale there are crassly social, unemotional beings who are repugnant to the artist, while the great majority fall into a middle range. Although Hawthorne, in his own life, tended to move toward a more balanced social state during his middle years, although he looked back with special dread upon isolated existence, he never lost that natural sympathy for the sensitive and solitary soul.

The struggle within an individual between his desire for isolation and his desire for society sets forth a problem central to Hawthornian philosophy. Solitary life, a contentment with one's own self, has about it a cold but wholesome quality which is difficult to maintain in group living. At the same time, however, society offers a warmth and companionship which is essential to man's well-being. The continual dilemma of those individuals whose native sympathies would lead them along the quiet and lonely pathway emphasizes the struggle. When emerging into the social order the individual encounters mass imperfection; yet, emergence is mandatory. There can be little doubt that Hawthorne's preoccupation with this problem reflects a struggle contained within his own personality. For Hawthorne's part, the question was never completely resolved. The conflict lessened, but it did not cease. For mankind, Hawthorne urges a full participation in the social way. The imperfect nature of society makes mere association an imperfect solution, but the gregarious appetite of man makes it the only possible one.

## CHAPTER IV

### REALITY AND RELIGION

At the heart of the Hawthornian world view are two intangible interests which are formed upon faith and which supersede in a calm fashion other concepts developed from observation and reflection. These dual essences, "reality" and religion, are frequently fused, because Hawthorne's conception of actuality falls within a religious framework. At other times, the nature of the actual becomes a unique problem in Hawthorne's conquest of ideas. For the most part, however, the commentary on "reality" serves as prefatory material for a systematized analysis of his religious thought.

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### REALITY

Although it may appear both personal and intuitive at first glance, Hawthorne's vision of "reality" is not essentially a mystical one. Ultimately, it is highly impersonal, completely natural, and thoroughly unspectacular. This vision, dealt with on two planes, concerns a single essence. The superficial voicings of polite society often counterfeit the hidden thoughts of the social participants in the same manner that the perception of sensory phenomena cloaks life's spiritual values. An underlying "reality" may be detected on both these levels, in the first instance on a limited or human plane and in

the second on a limitless or spiritual one.

Earthly things do not possess finality.

On being transported to strange scenes, we feel as if all were unreal. This is but the perception of the true unreality of earthly things, made evident by the want of congruity between ourselves and them.(127)

An attempt to discover a true and direct knowledge of the material world in which man lives lies beyond Hawthorne's desire. Such a knowledge, if ascertainable, would prove of little worth. "But then, as I have said above, the grosser life is a dream, and the spiritual life a reality."(128)

Nothing in worldly life constitutes "reality" in a greater sense; for a prime ingredient of the life compound is that it shall be ephemeral and shadowy.

Indeed, we are but shadows—we are not endowed with real life, and all that seems most real about us is but the thinnest substance of a dream—till the heart is touched. That touch creates us—then we begin to be—thereby we are beings of reality, and inheritors of eternity.(129)

Several seemingly Platonic reflections, reminiscent of Plato's cave symbolism, when considered in conjunction with other facets of Hawthorne's total conception, are seen in their true light as moral assertions of a spiritual truth rather than as elevated metaphysical speculation for its own sake.

In truth, words fail when attempting to define "reality," for it is experienced through the feelings and not through the intellect. "Who has not been conscious of mysteries within his mind, mysteries of truth and reality, which will not wear the chains of language?"(130) While a statement on the exact nature of actuality is never advanced,

it may be averred that what the great body of mankind clutches as "reality" is but delusive externality. "Human nature craves a certain materialism, and clings pertinaciously to what is tangible, as if that were of more importance than the spirit accidentally involved in it."(131)

That which is actual is also immortal, timeless, indestructible. Pure beauty, of the type which Shelley poetized, possesses these qualities. "Not that beauty is worthy of less than immortality; no, the beautiful should live forever--and thence, perhaps, the sense of impropriety when we see it triumphed over by time."(132) Earthly beauty, though it be a deserving reflection of a perfect spiritual beauty, is unfortunately bounded. Celestial beauty is unblemished and infinite; the world's beauty is finite.

Sophistication, however delicately it is contrived, often brings its observer to an awareness of the obvious incongruity between what is said and what is thought. Polite conversation perpetually borders on deceit. "Strange spectacle in human life where it is the instinctive effort of one and all to hide those sad realities, and leave them undisturbed beneath a heap of superficial topics which constitute the materials of intercourse between man and man!"(133) Social intercourse, as Hawthorne observes it, partakes too often of the purely artificial.

Two paths to "reality"--one man-centered, one God-centered--seemed worthy of investigation by Hawthorne. The first and more artistic medium, one which man may attempt, is that of the imagination. "It is only through the medium of the imagination that we can lessen

those iron fetters, which we call truth and reality, and make ourselves even partially sensible what prisoners we are." (134) A heightened imagination, then, may cut through the outer layers of life and into "reality." Imagination is a man-centered, active medium which pierces and reveals. Although Hawthorne frequently employed this method in his fiction, he discussed it but little. Instead, he allowed the work to be the final testimony of the efficacy of this approach.

The second medium of perception is passive, intuitive, and God-centered. "There is something truer and more real than what we can see with the eyes and touch with the finger." (135) God, in his wise Providence, occasionally permits the actual to break through the deceptive externality of life. This breakthrough may occur in the rugged beauties of nature or in the delicately contrived, man-made arts. When viewing majestic and awesome beauty, a person may instantly intuit, with no effort on his own part, the existence of those universal forces and truths to which he is normally blinded. Thus it is that a sunset or a Raphael painting tends to reassure man of that full and final acquaintance with "reality" which awaits the close of physical life.

"Realities keep to the rear, and put forward an advance-guard of show and humbug." (136) Repeatedly, the novelist refers to that lesser plane of deception—one on which the unreal quality of the daily events of life is too apparent. Many of the artificialities which confront man in society are intuitively fathomed by sensitive

observers. "But yet, in some indescribable way (as is the case with all that has deluded us when once found out), the poor reality was felt beneath the cunning artifice."(137)

The manner in which idealism works is intimately related to the quest for "reality." Since the "realities" of life are all important, he who falls short of knowing them, he who never attains his ideals, has still advanced further than the man who manages to accumulate the merely material goods of life.

Yet, after all, let us acknowledge it wiser, if not more sagacious, to follow out one's day-dream to its final consummation, although, if the vision have been worth the having, it is certain never to be consummated otherwise than by a failure. And what of that? Its airiest fragments, impalpable as they may be, will possess a value that lurks not in the most ponderous realities of any practicable scheme. They are not the rubbish of the mind.(138)

Meaningful success can be gained in striving for those indescribable yet permanent truths just beyond man's immediate reach. "I think I might yield to higher poetry of heavenlier wisdom than mortals in the flesh have ever sung or uttered."(139) Continually though, man is called away from his yearnings for truth and forced to dwell among a humanity largely dedicated to surface values. A person inclined toward artificiality presents an outer appearance beneath which his true being loses its original force. "It is the effect of anything completely and consummately artificial, in human shape, that the person impresses us as an unreality and as having hardly pith enough to cast a shadow upon the floor."(140)

Man, in this life, is curtained off from eternal essences; yet he retains mysterious inklings of prior happenings. "Scenes and events

that had once stained themselves, in deep colors, on the curtain that Time hangs around us, to shut us in from eternity, cannot be quite effaced by the succeeding phantasmagoria, and sometimes, by a palimpsest, show more strongly than they."(1:1) For the most part, man is unable to comprehend the inmost nature of those forces which are functioning all around him. Only on rare occasions does providential light break through man's dark enclosure. It is even more difficult for mortals to push aside momentarily that heavy tapestry. In truth, there is but one solution which man may himself effect.

Facts, as we really find them, whatever poetry they may involve, are covered with a stony excrescence of prose, resembling the crust on a beautiful sea-shell, and they never show their most delicate and divinest colors until we shall have dissolved away their grosser actualities by steeping them long in a powerful menstruum of thought.(1:2)

Hawthorne felt no need to question his faith in spiritual substances, for though the nature of actuality is difficult to define its presence is undeniable. It is blandly assumed and blandly revealed; for "reality" is a matter of feeling and faith, not one of intellect and logic.

Through glimpses of an eternal essence present in the inmost nature of this world, man may come to understand a true essence. There is, then, a fundamental spirituality permeating all. It may be seen, but imperfectly, as through a mist, for man's nature is a corrupted one. Our world is but a shadow of a greater spirituality in that its tangibles are ephemeral and do not constitute "reality." Although this world exists as but a moment in eternity, it is of

primary importance in that it must consume man's total effort while he dwells thereon.

Those visionaries who would neglect the duties of earthly life in an effort to achieve total idealism are in for a rude awakening. Hawthorne, thoroughly cognizant of the necessity of earthly living, has no leisure for mystical philosophies whose aim is to elevate man above this world. In truth, his entire philosophy is a caveat on detached and oblivious idealism. Although his perceptions are taken by him as natural assurances of that ultimate knowledge beginning with death, although he emphasizes that "reality," or spiritual life, does await man, he makes it quite clear that man's achievement of a spiritual state belongs to another world. Man's first duty is to the mortal world.

One opportunity of viewing naked actuality while still residing in this world is to be found in those glimmerings which God allows to filter through life. Conversely, man may, through empirical stimuli distilled by the imagination, break through to that selfsame inner truth. "Reality"—that all-engulfing presence which surrounds, is present within, and occasionally darts through the external crust of life—may be arrived at in either fashion—through the strivings of man or through the beneficences of God. Hawthorne's comments on "reality" are wholly intuitive, but he assumes that mankind is potentially capable of an identical intuition. "Reality" is an undeniable natural phenomenon of which all men may partake as they are individually capable. The novelist did not assume that he alone held a private

telephone line with divinity.

Hawthorne's understanding of "reality" blends readily with his acceptance of sin and with the general tenor of his moral and religious thought; for although he believes that an ideal world transcends the phenomenal one, he insists that man's life is a pilgrimage through the material world and that man's chief concern must remain in that immediate realm where the will to goodness is feeble and the propensity to evil staggering. At the same time, the novelist would offer a severe warning to those individuals who would shirk the obligations of mortal life. Although Hawthorne's belief in the existence of an underlying "reality" is firmly rooted, his commentary on the exact nature of that "reality" is not explicit. Taken as a group, his assertions of "reality" stand more as a preface to his ideas on religion than as pure philosophical strictures.

## 2

## RELIGION

Religious faith is possible not because man is good, an image of the divine, but because God is powerful and unduly benevolent. A religious attitude may exist in spite of man's inherent evil and weakness. Of all the thought areas with which Hawthorne concerned himself, that of religion is the most clearly and consistently defined. Despite the lack of a specific name with which to label Hawthorne's religious concepts, the nature of his religious thought is easily understood.

"Hawthorne never made any mention of his or his sisters'

attending church while they were children, and his days at Bowdoin were filled with fines imposed for cutting prayers and Sunday chapel.<sup>32</sup> Like many another religious man he had no Sunday religion. Nominally a Unitarian, wedded to the daughter of a devout Unitarian, Hawthorne cared little or nothing for specific creeds. He was too keenly aware of man as a sinner to accept in toto the optimistic Unitarianism of his generation. When Hawthorne reflected on Jesus, His goodness seemed less significant than the evil things which men had done to Him.<sup>33</sup> An hereditary and instinctive awareness of evil prevented Hawthorne's accepting an easy religion.

### Soul

Hawthorne's belief in that spiritual essence which Christianity has designated man's soul was unshakeable.

We do wrong to our departed friends, and clog our own heavenward aspirations, by connecting the idea of the grave with that of death. Our thoughts should follow the celestial soul, and not the earthly corpse.(143)

A first acquaintance with one's soul may come through suffering.

Any sort of bodily and earthly torment may serve to make us sensible that we have a soul that is not within the jurisdiction of such shadowy demons,—it separates the immortal within us from the mortal.(144)

Sufferings of the body are but haircloths which quicken the soul's stirrings.

<sup>32</sup>Manning Hawthorne, "Parental and Family Influences on Hawthorne," Essex Institute Historical Collections, LXXVI (1940), 6.

<sup>33</sup>Cantwell, The American Years, p. 90.

Yet words are not without their use, even for purposes of explanation,—but merely for explaining outward acts, and all sorts of external things, leaving the soul's life and action to explain itself in its own way.(145)

Man's soul is not his property, but functions as a thing apart with directions all its own. Frequently, souls are squeezed, perhaps by sin, until their flutterings become enfeebled. "For there are states of our spiritual system when the throb of the soul's life is too faint and weak to render us capable of religious aspiration."(146) Although a soul may fall becalmed in individual instances, it still retains full potentiality for goodness.

All souls belong to God.

It takes down the solitary pride of man, beyond most other things, to find the impracticability of flinging aside affections that have grown irksome. The bands that were silken once are apt to become iron fetters when we desire to shake them off. Our souls, after all, are not our own. We convey a property in them to those with whom we associate; but to what extent can never be known, until we feel the tug, the agony, of our abortive effort to resume an exclusive sway over ourselves.(147)

"It is because the spirit is inestimable that the lifeless body is so little valued."(148) Hawthorne's conception of man's soul, while conventionally Christian, is also conventionally vague. There is no attempt to ferret out the secrets of a soul beyond the fact that there is a something which resides within the body during life and leaves it upon death for higher regions. It is viewed as a bit of divine property temporarily housed by a beneficent Creator in physical beings.

### Immortality

Actions in this life serve as a springboard for immortality.

"The soul shall survive its frail earthly tenement; and if we have

conducted ourselves justly here, there will be a reward for us in another, and a better world."(149) "And whatever may be the duration of this earthly existence, let it ever be in our minds, that another comes hastening on—which is eternal."(150) This basic notion of eternal life does not deviate appreciably from the standard body of Christian teachings.

Heaven is a joyous place only a breath away; yet human nature strives too frequently for less substantial rewards. "A man will undergo great toil and hardship for ends that must be many years distant,—as wealth or fame,—but none for an end that may be close at hand,—as the joys of heaven."(151) Man should fasten his gaze upon firmly rooted eternality, rather than a fluctuating worldly life.

Has it talked for so many ages and meant nothing all the while? No; for those ages find utterance in the sea's unchanging voice, and warn the listener to withdraw his interest from moral vicissitudes, and let the infinite idea of eternity pervade his soul.(152)

Good deeds and faith thrust aside the curtain between the momentary and the eternal. "And thus we, night wanderers through a stormy and dismal world, if we bear the lamp of Faith, enkindled at a celestial fire, it will surely lead us home to that heaven whence its radiance was borrowed."(153) There is little to be perceived in Hawthorne's presentation of immortality which would not be acceptable to the majority of Christian believers. His declaration of faith in an afterlife, though it is made with certainty, nowise balances the darker aspects of his life philosophy.

Somehow, the novelist had picked up the idea that mental labor

will find its completion in the next life. "It seems a greater pity that an accomplished worker with the hand should perish prematurely, than a person of great intellect; because intellectual arts may be cultivated in the next world, but not physical ones."(154) This sort of conjecture on the exact nature of a soul, or on the heaven in which it dwells, points out once more that Hawthorne's religion did not always evolve from that rationalism so intimately linked with Unitarianism.

In one way, an anthropomorphic one, the necessity for immortality is affirmed. "Thus ever does the gross fatality of earth exult in its invariable triumph over the immortal essence which, in this dim sphere of half development, demands the completeness of a higher state."(155) Heaven affords Utopian fulfillment for earth's projects. Moreover, it appears as a mecca for total personalities--loved ones are united, poets round off their poems, all is brought to completion.

The existence of a higher life is thus proclaimed: first, God is benevolent; second, there is sense and order to man's existence; third, the nature of physical life is incomplete; fourth, since this life is incomplete and since God is just and good, there must be a heaven.

This so frequent abortion of man's dearest projects must be taken as a proof that the deeds of earth, however etherealized by piety or genius, are without value, except as exercises and manifestations of the spirit. In heaven, all ordinary thought is higher and more melodious than Milton's song. Then, would he add another verse to any strain that he had left unfinished here?(156)

Hawthorne begins empirically with a hard world-centered texture and

ascends intuitively to celestial heights.

But God would not have made the close so dark and wretched, if there were nothing beyond; for then it would have been a fiend that created us, and measured out our existence, and not God. It would be something beyond wrong—it would be insult—to be thrust out of life into annihilation in this miserable way. So, out of the very bitterness of death, I gather the sweet assurance of a better state of being.(157)

In one instance, Hawthorne questions his own naivete' in assuming the existence of heaven with such wishful logic.

If we consider the lives of the lower animals, we shall see in them a close parallelism to those of mortals;—toil, struggle, danger, privation, mingled with glimpses of peace and ease; enmity, affection, a continual hope of bettering themselves, although their objects lie at less distance before them than our own do. Thus, no argument from the imperfect character of our existence, and its delusory promises, and its injustice, can be drawn in reference to our immortality, without, in a degree, being applicable to our brute brethren.(158)

It is highly probable that immortality has become so fixed a concept that it, like sin, may occasionally be treated with levity. On the other hand, this one statement may reflect an earnest doubt, one soon merged in a sea of certainty.

Mortal life's grim limitations forewarn eventual perfection.

God himself cannot compensate to us for being born, in any period short of eternity. All the misery we endure here constitutes a claim for another life;—and, still more, all the happiness, because all true happiness involves something more than the earth owns, and something more than a mortal capacity for the enjoyment of it.(159)

And it is the promise of a blessed eternity; for our creator would never have made such lovely days and have given us the deep hearts to enjoy them, above and beyond all thought, unless we were meant to be immortal. This sunshine is a golden pledge thereof. It beams through the gates of paradise and shows us glimpses far inward.(160)

Beauty, "reality," immortality, though they are kindred terms to Hawthorne, are not identical in connotation. Beauty, as a state of

taste, may be thought of as relative and amoral. Yet beauty, as man knows it, is but the symbol of a permanent essence. Since genuine beauty descends from another world, it tends to be confused as a symbol with the condition which it symbolizes. The conceptions of "reality" and immortality are closely allied in that immortality is merely the return of the soul to a state of permanent "reality"—a "reality" which can be only imperfectly known in physical life, but which immortality perpetuates.

In the midst of more objective voicings there rings always a personal note. "Yet I am not loath to go away; impatient rather; for, taking no root, I soon weary of any soil in which I may be temporarily deposited. The same impatience I sometimes feel or conceive of as regards this earthly life. . . ." (161) Hawthorne dreaded that he might die without leaving ample provision for his wife and children, but there is no evidence in his writings of a personal fear of death. Immortality is accepted as a natural legacy. At fifty-five, Hawthorne was old and tired; Una's severe illness in Italy had especially depleted his strength. When he returned to America in 1860, the fire and zest of ten years previous had thoroughly chilled. Death wore a kindly face.

"Now, the very knowledge of God sufficiently proves the immortality of the soul, which rises above the world, since an evanescent breath or inspiration could not arrive at the fountain of life."<sup>34</sup> The Calvinistic concept of the after life is proved by the

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<sup>34</sup>Calvin, Institutes, I, 204.

very fact that God exists. For Hawthorne, heaven is intuitive. "We have strongly within us the sense of an undying principle, and we transfer that true sense to this life and to the body, instead of interpreting it justly as the promise of spiritual immortality."(162) It is the incurable disease of a corrupted humanity that it perverts and mischannels its longing for immortality.

If man performs good deeds and keeps faith he will be awarded a niche in heaven. Heaven, where human aspirations are culminated on a divine level, is thought of as a more perfect world. Here man is compensated for the mud of his earthly life. The existence of a spiritual life is known through an undeniable intuition. Taken as a group, these Hawthornian reflections on immortality are more notable for their number than for their variety.

#### God

God is presented in surprisingly warm terms. Hawthorne speaks of a personal deity, a loving caretaker, whose chief attribute is goodness. It is true that an equally strong conception of fortune emphasizes the complete and awesome sovereignty of God.

Calvin had stressed the ruling powers of the Creator.

Therefore, since God claims a power unknown to us of governing the world, let this be to us the law of sobriety and modesty, to acquiesce to his supreme dominion, to account his will the only rule of righteousness, and most righteous cause of all things.<sup>35</sup> Puritan divines had likewise singled out the sovereignty of God as the one attribute which could be rendered most vivid to human

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., I, 235.

intelligence.<sup>36</sup> While Hawthorne is a thoroughgoing Puritan in his clear-cut recognition of the governing power of God, or Providence, he leans toward an abstract optimism when he reflects on the nature of God. Similarly, Calvinism, while it preaches the attribute of sovereignty for the most part, makes it plain enough in its dogma that through His beneficence God is a warm and munificent father to each and all.

To Hawthorne, God is immeasurably good.

Thus it appears that all the external beauty of the universe is a free gift from God over and above what is necessary to our comfort. How grateful, then, should we be to that divine Benevolence, which showers even superfluous bounties upon us!(163)

While God's goodness is bountiful in an absolute or final sense, immediate actions remain inscrutable. "God has imparted to the human soul a marvelous strength in guarding its secrets, and he keeps at least the deepest and most inward record for his own perusal."(164) He reads souls as readily as man reads a newspaper, and He gives each a just and thorough reading.

There is no mention, when dealing with that infinite disembodied primal spirit, of anger or harshness. Providence is necessarily severe in that itmingles with a corrupted world, and is viewed as it works upon that world; but God, although he institutes Providence, is not besmeared with earth's mire.

A paternal God actively loves and cares for all mankind.

It is a comfortable thought, that the smallest and most turbid mud-puddle can contain its own picture of Heaven. Let us remember this, when we feel inclined to deny all spiritual life to some

<sup>36</sup> William Warren Sweet, Religion in Colonial America (New York, 1951), p. 98.

people, in whom, nevertheless, our Father may perhaps see the image of his face.(165)

Manifestations of that loving care are felt in mortal life. "God does not let us live anywhere or anyhow on earth, without placing something of Heaven close at hand, by rightly using and considering which, the earthly darkness or trouble will vanish, and all be Heaven."(166)

Trinitarians stress the qualities of goodness and mercy when speaking of Christ. The Puritans had thought in terms of "irresistible grace." Hawthorne, since he intellectually rejects the divinity of Jesus, may well have shifted back to God those attributes which Trinitarians find personified in Christ. That is not to say that Trinitarians do not attribute supreme goodness and mercy to God, for they do; yet they frequently treat God as a rather distant supreme Deity and view Christ as an immediate and warm Savior. While Providence is seen as a comparatively cold force by Hawthorne, God, by contrast, takes on a warmth not typical of the Puritan's God.

Calvinism assures man of the active directive energies of God.

For he is accounted omnipotent, not because he is able to act, yet sits down in idleness, or continues by a general instinct the order of nature originally appointed by him; but because he governs heaven and earth by his providence, and regulates all things in such a manner that nothing happens but according to his counsel.<sup>37</sup>

Hawthorne, in like vein, writes of a supreme caretaker. "But God, who made us, knows, and will not leave us on our toilsome and doubtful march, either to wander in infinite uncertainty, or perish by the way!"(167) Once again there is a recognition of a warm dominion. As the recipient of paternal care, man owes prayer for what is so

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<sup>37</sup>Calvin, Institutes, I, 220.

gratuitously given. "The air, with God's sweetest and tenderest sunshine in it, was meant for mankind to breathe into their hearts, and send forth again as the utterance of prayer."(168)

Prayer is one expression of man's dutiful allegiance to God; humility is another. "This is the true way to do; a man ought not to be too proud to let his eyes be moistened in the presence of God and of a friend."(169) "God knows best; but I wish He had so ordered it that our mortal bodies, when we have done with them, might vanish out of sight and sense, like bubbles."(170) Whether in jest or in earnest, Hawthorne does not question divine intelligence; he remains humble before it. Feeling and faith provide sufficient grounds for belief. "But he never discussed religion in set terms either in his writings or in his talk. He 'believed' in God but never sought to define him."<sup>38</sup>

In contrast to the dark affirmation of Providence, Hawthorne's warm assertion of God comes as a pleasant surprise. The dominant impression of God, if God may be separated from his own providential nature, is more Unitarian than Puritan. While Hawthorne had almost nothing to say on the subject of mercy itself, he does pay full homage to God's goodness.

<sup>38</sup> Julian Hawthorne, The Memoirs of Julian Hawthorne, ed. Edith G. Hawthorne (New York, 1938), p. 16. It is interesting to speculate on the nature of the God in which Hawthorne believed. It would seem from the commentary on man's soul and on immortality that the God he envisioned did not differ greatly from the Christian God as presented in the Scriptures. However, since Hawthorne does differ from the majority of Christians in that he rejects the Trinity and in that he seems to have had little belief in the devil or in hell, it may well be that his conception of God is not nearly so conventional as it might at first appear.

Aspects of Religion

Religion is an unlettered institution in that it requires simplicity and humility of its subjects rather than erudition. In the most trivial workings of life, religion reaches out to man. "No fountain is so small but that Heaven may be imaged in its bosom."(171) No creature is left dry by the outflowing religious tide.

"Purity and simplicity hold converse at ever moment with their Creator."(172) It is a consistent belief of Hawthorne's that simplicity and purity are intimately connected with divinity. Just as there is an undeniable chain of evil running throughout life, even so is there a corresponding chain of goodness.

In every good action there is a divine quality, which does not end with the completion of that particular deed, but goes on to bring forth good works in an infinite series. It is seldom possible, indeed, for human eyes to trace out the chain of blessed consequences, that extends from a man's simple and conscientious act, here on earth, and connects it with those labors of love which the angels make it their joy to perform, in heaven above.(173)

Assertions of goodness appear as a minority report however, when placed beside the vivid and immense body of recognized evil. Although goodness holds equal qualitative strength with evil, the former is overwhelmed by the quantity of the latter. Hawthorne's commentary on the various aspects of religion, in its repeated emphasis of goodness, tends to neglect for the moment the sterner phase of religion—God's indefeasible sovereignty.

Unless the believer have an unquestioning faith, religion provides a free play for his imagination. Hawthorne is numbered among those who have faith; yet he inserts a rather daring thought of what conceivably might be.

Perhaps there are higher intelligences that look upon all the manifestations of the human mind--metaphysics, ethics, histories, politics, poems, stories etc etc--with the same interest as we do on flowers, or any other humble production of nature; finding a beauty and fitness even in the poorest of them which we cannot see in the best.(174)

It is a fanciful idea, not a serious one.

"Generally, I suspect, when people throw off the faith they were born in, the best soil of their hearts is apt to cling to its roots."(175) In England, in Rome, however far from the land of his ancestors Hawthorne journeyed, he never relinquished his birthright. The roots were in Puritanism and they were infinitely deep.

Calvin was certain that the day of judgment would see numerous souls fallen into Hell. "For those whom the Lord does not favour with the government of his Spirit, he abandons, in righteous judgement, to the influence of Satan."<sup>39</sup> While there are abundant comments by Hawthorne affirming his mental and emotional acceptance of God and Heaven, there is little or no evidence, outside of fictional representations, that the novelist countenanced a literal belief in Satan and Hell. At times, he seems to take what is tantamount to the existentialist view that man is his own hell. "At the last day—I presume, that is, in all future days, when we see ourselves as we are—man's only inexorable judge will be himself, and the punishment of his sins will be the perception of them."(176) Satan and Hell find little room in Hawthorne's world of ideas, yet it is true that he utilized them as dramatic features of his tales. It is conceivable that Satan

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<sup>39</sup>Calvin, Institutes, I, 335.

and Hell, in their traditional employment as fictional entities, are known to the Hawthorne intellect as convenient metaphors for evil; even though they are not wholly discarded from an emotional standpoint.

A blacksmith may perform his tasks in a religious manner. Calvin and the Puritan fathers had preached the doctrine that work is worship. ("We do ourselves wrong, and too meanly estimate the Holiness above us, when we deem that any act or enjoyment, good in itself, is not good to do religiously."(177))

Hawthorne chose to comment on the brighter aspects of religion rather than the darker ones. Religion is seen as more than a way of life; it becomes life itself. Purity, goodness, humility are commended as earthly manifestations of divinity.

#### Formal Religion

Hawthorne's irreligion consisted in his not attending church: as a child, he was rarely present at Sunday services; during his courtship, Sophia could not prevail upon him to hear visiting ministers; in England, he sent the children to church and felt much better thereby, but did not go himself. There was no one sect with sufficient answers for Hawthorne's questioning mind. He had cast off some vital Puritan beliefs as untenable, but he failed to find comfort in the rationalistic program of New England Unitarianism. The eternal wrangling over minute doctrinal points, which formal religions frequently engage in, was especially repugnant. Hawthorne dwelt in a subjective religious world which felt no need for the objective act of church going.

"O, but the church is the symbol of religion. May its site, which was consecrated on the day when the first tree was felled, be kept holy forever, a spot of solitude and peace, amid the trouble and vanity of our week-day world!"(178) While the church had slight appeal to Hawthorne the individual, he heartily recommends it for the rest of mankind. The Church, however, may be found in the individual heart with more certainty than in the visible church building.

Clerical people, with their dust-destined volumes, failed to make a favorable impression. "I find that my respect for clerical people as such, and my faith in the utility of their office, decreases daily. We certainly do need a new revelation—a new system—for there seems to be no life in the old one."(179) There is more than one appeal by Hawthorne for a new apostle to rescue Protestantism from stagnant waters.

One of the most disconcerting aspects of formal religion is that it rapidly grows intolerant. This schismatic tendency of Protestantism is as old as time. Sects tend to pull apart rather than draw together in a mutual effort for a common cause.

Each sect surrounds its own righteousness with a hedge of thorns. It is difficult for the good Christian to acknowledge the good Pagan; almost impossible for the good Orthodox to grasp the hand of the good Unitarian, leaving to their Creator to settle the matters in dispute, and giving their mutual efforts strongly and trustingly to whatever right thing is too evident to be mistaken.(180)

Simplicity is the keynote of religion. Books of religion, many of which Hawthorne had thumbed, seemed to him to miss the heart of the matter.

Books of religion, however, cannot be considered a fair test

of the enduring and vivacious properties of human thought, because such books so seldom really touch upon their ostensible subject, and have, therefore, so little business to be written at all. So long as an unlettered soul can attain to saving grace, there would seem to be no deadly error in holding theological libraries to be accumulations of, for the most part, stupendous impertinence.(181)

Notwithstanding an evident disdain of theological tomes, there is every indication that Hawthorne held the Bible to be the inspired word of God. In a letter to his publisher, James T. Fields, in 1860, there is a tribute to the saving powers of the Scriptures:

Did I not suggest to you, last summer, the publication of the Bible in ten or twelve 12 mo volumes? I think it would have great success, and, at least (but, as a publisher, I suppose this is the very smallest of your cares), it would result in the salvation of a great many souls, who would never find their way to heaven, if left to learn it from the inconvenient editions of the Scriptures now in use.<sup>40</sup>

By 1858, Hawthorne had increasingly come to feel that Protestantism needed rejuvenation. "Protestantism needs a new apostle to convert it into something positive. . . ."(182) In the same year he made his first real acquaintance with Catholicism,<sup>41</sup> and was both attracted and repelled by what he found. "What better use could be made of life, after middle-age, when the accumulated sins are many and the remaining temptations few, than to spend it all in kissing the black cross of the Coliseum!"(183) While Catholicism, especially the Roman Popes, evoked rather harsh criticism and satirical thrusts from Hawthorne, he discovered that certain practices of the Catholic faith, notably the confessional, deeply appealed to him.

<sup>40</sup>James T. Fields, Yesterday with Authors (Boston, 1900), p. 95.

<sup>41</sup>Hawthorne's youngest daughter, Rose, became a Catholic convert some years after her father's death.

The Catholic Church is praiseworthy in that it keeps religion present to the daily life of man.

Whatever may be the iniquities of the papal system, it was a wise and lovely sentiment that set up the frequent shrine and cross along the roadside. No wayfarer, bent on whatever worldly errand, can fail to be reminded at every mile or two, that this is not the business which most concerns him. The pleasure-seeker is silently admonished to look heavenward for a joy infinitely greater than he now possesses. The wretch in temptation beholds the cross, and is warned that, if he yield, the Saviour's agony for his sake will have been endured in vain.(184)

Catholicism continually reminds her followers of life's deeper meanings. Hawthorne is more than superficially attracted by Catholicism, but it is extremely doubtful that he would have ever become a convert. His energy for any sort of outer participation in religion was quite feeble.

Since the universe in which he found himself was predominantly moral, Hawthorne felt man's chief business and urgent problem to be a sufficient morality.<sup>42</sup> Calvinism had provided an intellectual background steeped in morality.

Calvinism in fact is not essentially a systematic body of doctrine. Its essence is revealed in that which Calvin consistently strove to effect and actually succeeded in effecting in no small degree—the moralisation of all life by religion.<sup>43</sup>

Hawthorne's religion is not formally Calvinistic in that it is not Trinitarian, and in that it finds no faith in "election" and "irresistible grace." Literal Satans, literal Hells, and the angry God of early New England are not taken seriously. Hawthorne did

<sup>42</sup>Vernon L. Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought (New York, 1927), II, 442.

<sup>43</sup>A. Mitchell Hunter, The Teaching of Calvin (London, 1950), p. 298.

believe in the soul, in immortality, in a God with the attributes which Christian theology reiterates, and in the saving power of the Holy Writ. Goodness in this life is to be rewarded by heaven; man's sins are to be punished, possibly through a persistently conscious dwelling with those very sins. Heaven is to compensate man for an imperfect earthly life.

"Hawthorne's religious faith was of an almost childlike simplicity, though it was as deeply rooted as his life itself."<sup>44</sup> Religion is not that urge which brings man to church on Sunday, but it is that, instead, which gives meaning and color to all life's actions. Inklings of doubt, if they occurred, were quickly lost in the certainty of a naive but admirable faith. Sophia's unstinting belief in God must have given added impetus to that intuitive faith which her husband possessed. "He deeply accepted his wife's rejoicing faith, and perceived the limitations of reason."<sup>45</sup>

God in his pure form, considered apart from Providence, is far more of the paternal being and less of the almighty spirit than might be suspected. The further Hawthorne moved into abstraction and away from the dance of life, the more optimistic he became. Thus Providence, as the chief protagonist of the texture of life, is seen in rigid gray lines. The workings of Providence are visible to the Hawthorne eye; hence they are instinctively intellectualized with immediate pessimism, although the long look at Providence, unobtainable in this sphere, is

<sup>44</sup> Julian Hawthorne, "Hawthorne's Philosophy," The Century Magazine, XXXII (May, 1886), 91.

<sup>45</sup> Julian Hawthorne, Memoirs, p. 16.

an optimistic one. To God, on the other hand, felt through the unlettered heart, is ascribed warm and personal, almost sunshiny attributes.

Jesus affords a special interpretative problem. He enters Hawthorne's writings only in brief and scattered passages. Nowhere is the Hawthorne intellect seriously concentrated on the question of his divinity. However, in a letter to Sophia, written the 24th of December 1839, the would-be husband in alluding to the fact that the Custom House employees must work on Christmas day, makes warm mention of Jesus. "The holiest of holydays--the day that brought ransom to all other sinners--leaves us in slavery still."<sup>46</sup> Although he had discarded a belief in the divinity of Jesus, possibly Hawthorne had not completely shaken it from his mind.

Religion is traditionally one of the most significant institutions confronting man in society. All life is a religious reflection, for religion as an institution casts its shadow over the whole scope of human activity. It is not suggested that Hawthorne was pious, notably devout, or in any way a proselytizer of the good life; but rather that he saw the ephemeral procession of life as a somber one, and that he recognized religious faith as the one necessary accompaniment to mortal man's procession.

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<sup>46</sup> Love Letters, I, 118.

## CHAPTER V

### SOCIETY

Social and civic institutions, Hawthorne scans with a practical but slightly jaundiced eye. Society in its greater sense, and political society more specifically, are to be interpreted as earthly actualities, conceived and perpetuated by man out of his need for cooperation and for his own convenience. In contrast to the imponderable presence of a religious force which dwells both above man and within his individual heart, and which renders every action both moral and meaningful, society emerges as a gross superficiality. This is not to imply that institutionalized social forces are not central to earthly life—for they are indeed a prime concern—but rather that they are not spiritual in essence.

Religion, while it is simultaneously the most immediate and the most ultimate of actualities, and while it enters somehow into all actions, allows man free rein to work out his social living in his own limited and blundering way. Somehow, man, with all his spiritual shortsightedness, caught up in marble and mud—man who goes wrong more often than right—somehow, he constructs upon the social appetite a formalized mode of life which regulates his earthly intercourse and which he recognizes as society. The social way is the natural way—in so far as the urge to group is as dominant as the urge to mate—yet, when seen in its refined form, institutionalized and standardized

society may be viewed as a monument to man's tendency to err.

In close conjunction with the social process, tradition looms ominous. In effect, it is tradition which nourishes and hands forward the more formalized and the more habitual aspects of the communal way. Man, wherever he might seek release, continually stumbles beneath the heavy weight of tradition. At times, tradition appears to the Hawthorne mind as an insidious pressure, distinct from yet intimately linked to social living. Less frequently it is seen as a worthwhile agent of conservatism.

#### Tradition

The Hawthornian analysis of tradition is overwhelmingly consistent to the point of monotony. The principal concern is for the decay, the sterility, the effeteness accompanying tradition. Life requires periodical renewing, for "Human nature will not flourish, any more than a potato, if it be planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn-out soil."(185) Even though tradition propagates and increases the oppressive weight on man's shoulder, its conservative influence is a utilitarian one. "This long connection of a family with one spot, as its place of birth and burial, creates a kindred between the human being and the locality, quite independent of any charm in the scenery or moral circumstances that surround him. It is not love, but instinct."(186) An appetite for the land, of the kind expressed in Tennyson's "Northern Farmer Old Style," presents the nobler countenance of tradition. Unfortunately, as is the case with many a pure desire, evil adheres to its practical

evolution.

Undoubtedly, the five generations of Puritan ancestors which had preceded Nathaniel Hawthorne, as well as the spirit of Salem itself, were in his blood. He could not rid himself of this profound influence.<sup>47</sup> It is this sort of tradition—the double-barreled internal pressure of heredity and environment—which confounds Hawthorne. To escape from tradition is to escape from one's physical self.

"The evil of these departed years would naturally have sprung up again, in such rank weeds (symbolic of the transmitted vices of society) as are always prone to root themselves about human dwellings."  
 (187) There is a heavy insistence that decay and vice invariably follow the passage of time and that a dwelling enriched by age evinces the mouldy face of evil. Tradition transmits that evil.

Hence, too, might be drawn a weighty lesson from the little regarded truth, that the act of the passing generation is the germ which may and must produce good or evil fruit in a far-distant time; that, together with the seed of the merely temporary crop, which mortals term expediency, they inevitably sow the acorns of a more enduring growth, which may darkly overshadow their posterity.  
 (188)

Good, which may theoretically be transmitted, tends to melt before the glare of its darkened antithesis.

Vice is robust and free roaming, not caged and sickly; it is an untamed entity swept forward by tradition.

Not to be deficient in this particular, the author has provided himself with a moral,—the truth, namely that the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and,

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<sup>47</sup> Manning Hawthorne, "Hawthorne's Early Years," Essex Institute Historical Collections, LXXIV, 21.

divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief; and he would feel it a singular gratification if this romance might effectually convince mankind—or, indeed, any one man—of the folly of tumbling down an avalanche of ill-gotten gold, or real estate, on the heads of an unfortunate posterity, thereby to maim and crush them, until the accumulated mass shall be scattered abroad in its original atoms.(189)

Each generation, if it is to breathe a pure air and labor with any degree of freedom, must somehow find release from the ever-increasing pressures of its past. From the point of pure theory, in the purely abstract realm, Hawthorne is seen as a would-be reformer of society, as a reader of Rousseau. He is seen as one who wishes man freed from the accumulated artifice of civilization. Actually, however, Hawthorne's practical recognition of the incorrigible yet necessary nature of man's physical sojourn belies the ideal.

"Tradition,—which sometimes brings down truth that history has let slip, but is oftener the wild babble of the time, such as was formerly spoken at the fireside and now congeals in the newspapers,—tradition is responsible for all contrary averments."(190) Tradition, in whatever manner it is perpetuated, speaks with an absolute voice. Yet, mere age fails to impress Hawthorne. He is interested in values rather than the purely antique. "An old thing is no better than a new thing, unless it [be] a symbol of something, or have some value in itself."(191)

Complete detachment from the past is impossible. Individuals and nations may change their minds, but they cannot change their history. Apparent change and newness is somehow connected with past events. Man continues to build onto the material and mental structures

of past ages, and in so doing drags behind him, like the chambered nautilus, an outgrown past.

The fact is, the world is accumulating too many materials for knowledge. We do not recognize for rubbish what is really rubbish; and under this head might be reckoned almost everything one sees in the British Museum; and as each generation leaves its fragments and potsherds behind it, such will finally be the desperate conclusion of the learned.(192)

The present is burthened too much with the past. We have not time, in our earthly existence, to appreciate what is warm with life, and immediately around us; yet we heap up all these old shells, out of which human life has long emerged, casting them off forever. I do not see how future ages are to stagger onward under all this dead weight, with the additions that will be continually made to it.(193)

If only man were allowed to start afresh, though Hawthorne sees no effective means of casting aside outmoded paraphernalia, then and only then would the transmitted sears of society heal in the new enthusiasm of fresh conquest. It is a young idea, a liberal idea, but scarcely a well-rounded one. When Hawthorne cries out that dead weight makes progress difficult, that society should amputate its withered limbs, he begins and ends with the same lament, but fails to provide the necessary surgical implements.

"But methinks it must be weary, weary, weary, this rusty unchangeable village-life, where men grow up, grow old, and die, in their fathers' dwellings, and are buried in their grandsires' very graves, the old skulls, and cross-bones being thrown out to make room for them, and shovelled in on the tops of their coffins."(194) The spectacle of a traditional life led in an unthinking manner is a depressing one, for it is felt that the person observed never comes alive. Hawthorne admits his own need for a physical rut, for a calm

external routine, to free his mind for action. The observed failure of a mind lost in traditional ways to once flex its muscles is most deplorable; mental fixedness is to be avoided at all costs.

Man's only release from tradition comes through fire and death. These two purifying agents are applied by Hawthorne to both the individual and the group problem. ("All towns should be made capable of purification by fire, or of decay, within each half-century. Otherwise, they become the hereditary haunts of vermin and noisomeness, besides standing apart from the possibility of such improvements as are constantly introduced into the rest of man's contrivances and accommodations." (195).) It is criminal to foist the present onto unborn generations—to pass on old homes, old ways, and old evils. Ideally, man should be allowed a new cycle each fifty years.

Late in his life, in 1862, the graying novelist appears to contradict his earlier conclusions. Such reversals of position are exceedingly rare, for Hawthorne normally probes and elaborates his ideas in an amazingly consistent manner. It is not his wont to jump from a considered opinion to its very opposite. Frequently, the Hawthornian paradox is nonexistent when the surface contradiction is evaluated in terms of the over-all thought pattern. In other instances, the intellectual phase of the writer's personality gives ground to temporary emotional outbursts or even to petty grievances. Then, too, Hawthorne is known to have occasionally spoken with tongue in cheek.

The sentiment expressed but two years prior to the novelist's

death is readily seen as a more conservative and perhaps a more reasoned approach to the problem.

It may seem to be paying dear for what many will reckon but a worthless weed; but the more historical associations we can link with our localities, the richer will be the daily life that feeds upon the past, and the more valuable the things that have been long established: so that our children will be less prodigal than their fathers in sacrificing good institutions to passionate impulses and impracticable theories.(196)

The bulk of Hawthorne's criticism of tradition decries the immense burden of a perpetuated evil. It fails to recognize that "good" may be transmitted to any worthwhile degree; it fails to give full recognition to tradition as a stabilizing element in society. Finally, when the author comes to speak of "good institutions," it is with the voice of an old man—one made more malleable and more conservative by a long and sharp engagement with life. The more balanced view, arrived at late in life, scarcely represents the dominant Hawthorne notion.

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born into a town overladen with old houses, old customs, old legends, and old evils. He inherited the rich and shadowy past of the Hawthorne family. On his maternal side, the Mannings were equally tradition-conscious. Mary Manning, the youth's aunt, had steeped him in New England lore. Then, too, from infancy he was made aware that certain accomplishments were expected of a Hawthorne. He rebelled against those expectations in taking up the pen. Perhaps the constant nagging of grandmother Manning and the Manning uncles had much to do with that rebellion. In any event, Hawthorne never quite came to a balanced understanding of tradition. His rebellion, for all its vinegar and impishness, is not an entirely

illogical one when viewed in the light of the youth's upbringing.

One too keenly attuned to the world's evil could not help feeling that any carry-over from the past is essentially an evil one. Tradition gives rise to social as well as personal problems. Intellectually and emotionally Hawthorne is repeatedly called on to face tradition. He recognized it for what it appeared to him, scrutinized it in the dark light of life's prenatal influences, but never quite knew what to make of it.

#### Society at Large

"Man is naturally a sociable being; not formed for himself alone, but destined to bear a part in the great scheme of nature. All his pleasures are heightened, and all his griefs are lessened, by participation. It is only in Society that the full energy of the mind is aroused, and all its powers drawn forth." (197) At age sixteen, some years before the artistic Hawthorne was to hesitate sensitively on the brink of society, the adolescent Hawthorne offers a lucid statement of social necessity. Together with a recognition of that necessity, the youth unhesitatingly affirms the nature of the social problem and the inevitable choice of answers which an individual must make. "Perhaps life may pass more tranquilly, estranged from the pursuits and the vexations of the multitude, but all the hurry and whirl of passion is preferable to the cold calmness of indifference." (198) After endless encounters with the crass actuality of social existence, after numerous cries of pain, Hawthorne is led, through living and through observing the life pattern of others, to accept in

his later years the prophetic statement of his adolescent self.

Though the appetite for society is genuine enough, the edifices erected on that urge are shallow and vain. "Alas that the vanity of dress should extend even to the grave!"(199) With all deference to the English poets of the eighteenth century, Hawthorne takes up the theme of man's vainglory. When the visible workings of society are seen apart from the shining theory which mandates them, they wear conspicuously the stamp of man's imperfectibility.

"Amid the seeming confusion of our mysterious world, individuals are so nicely adjusted to a system, and systems to one another and to a whole, that, by stepping aside for a moment, a man exposes himself to the fearful risk of losing his place forever."(200) Society mechanically thrusts itself forward on an uncharted track. Once the individual withdraws from its intricate train of movement he never regains his former seat. Those who remain "shivering behind" can but marvel at the unfeeling complexity of that in which they once participated. Hawthorne unquestionably believes, at this stage in his development, that a functional society, moulded by man of artificial ingredients, lacks spiritual substance. Society is binding on man in that acquiescence to it is necessary for a balanced participation in this life, yet it is factitious in that it is born of man's short and shallow view.

By the sheer force of its routine, the social way provides a needed fortress for the individual. Yet at the same time it is so superficially fashioned, so lacking in spiritual fiber, that it can scarcely withstand a sharp interruption of its order.

A revolution, or anything that interrupts social order, may afford opportunities for the individual display of eminent virtues; but its effects are pernicious to general morality. Most people are so constituted that they can be virtuous only in a certain routine, and an irregular course of public affairs demoralizes them.(201)

Society does render surface satisfaction in providing a necessary stabilization, for "It is one great advantage of a gregarious mode of life that each person rectifies his mind by other minds, and squares his conduct to that of his neighbors, so as seldom to be lost in eccentricity."(202) It is through social interplay that balance and perspective are attained and that an adjustment to group living is secured.

Social life's entire structure, however ordered on its crust, stands out to the Hawthornian eye as little more than an ingenuous personification of man's depravity. "We who are born into the world's artificial system can never adequately know how little in our present state and circumstances is natural, and how much is merely the interpolation of the perverted mind and heart of man."(203) Julian Hawthorne, although normally blind to the inner workings of his father's mind, was astute enough to recognize that "Another of Hawthorne's strongest perceptions was of the artificiality of our present civilization and of the superfluities and absurdities to which custom has insensibly blinded us."<sup>48</sup> As a novelist, Hawthorne was uniquely qualified to write on the necessary adjustment of the individual to society; for having remained on the outer rim of social activity for

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<sup>48</sup> Julian Hawthorne, "Hawthorne's Philosophy," Century, XXXII, 90.

twelve years, he saw the problem of participation with an excessively sharp focus.

"The advance of man from a savage and animal state may be as well measured by his mode and morality of dining, as by any other circumstance."(204) Society's plane is a cultivated and refined one. The exact state of a civilization may be observed in its outer manners, for society at large is so constituted that its degree of perfectibility may be taken on a surface reading. Hawthorne is not certain, when he carefully considers the possibilities of man in society, that there has been any internal advancement beyond the primitive state.

It is the impersonal and essentially heartless quality of the social order that Hawthorne most abhors.

In this republican country, amid the fluctuating waves of our social life, somebody is always at the drowning-point. The tragedy is enacted with as continual a repetition as that of a popular drama on a holiday; and nevertheless, is felt as deeply, perhaps, as when an hereditary noble sinks below his order. More deeply; since, with us, rank is the grosser substance of wealth and a splendid establishment, and has no spiritual existence after the death of these, but dies hopelessly along with them.(205)

The American social tendency toward an aristocracy of wealth is lamented as the peculiar shortcoming of a people keyed to materialistic values.

Although Hawthorne censures what seems to him an artificial mode of social conduct, he hastens to accept as valid the appetite upon which that mode has arisen. He speaks of a great chain of belonging. Mankind's gregarious inclinations lead him to look askance on those who attempt to stand apart. "But the sympathy or magnetism among human beings is more subtle and universal than we think; it exists, indeed,

among different classes of organized life, and vibrates from one to another."(206) If humanity would but allow its brotherhood to assert itself in a natural way, then all things would be possible. But there is a still more powerful force in man yet to be reckoned with--one which never changes, one which makes impossible a genuine social union. Noble theories fall short of their mark when actuated by a selfish and evil humanity. Nonetheless, in spite of the corrupt practice through which it becomes manifest, the gregarious inclination exists in a pure form.

This then is the nature of that institution governing man's conduct, that it beats down upon him, wearies him, yet demands his participation. Man must assume his function in a society propagated by tradition and grounded in superficiality. He must remain a helpless witness to the world's vanity "For, has not the world come to an awfully sophisticated pass, when, after a certain degree of acquaintance with it, we cannot even put ourselves to death in whole-hearted simplicity?"(207) Man must come to realize that society has progressed away from native joy and simplicity and into a realm of unwholesome artifice.

(Not that the modes and seeming possibilities of human enjoyment are rarer in our refined and softened era,—on the contrary, they never before were nearly so abundant,—but that mankind are getting so far beyond the childhood of their race that they scorn to be happy any longer. A simple and joyous character can find no place for itself among the sage and sombre figures that would put his unsophisticated cheerfulness to shame. The entire system of man's affairs, as at present established, is built up purposely to exclude the careless and happy soul. The very children would upbraid the wretched individual who should endeavor to take life and the world as—what we might naturally suppose them meant for—a place and opportunity for enjoyment.(208))

Humanity is seldom very clever at satisfying the possibilities of its finite range. "I sometimes apprehend that our institutions may perish before we shall have discovered the most precious of the possibilities which they involve."(209) Still, man must work diligently to perfect this world; he must reinforce, whenever and however possible, the necessary stable structure of society.

In times of revolution and public disturbance all absurdities are more unrestrained; the measure of calm sense, the habits, the orderly decency, are partially lost. More people become insane, I should suppose; offences against public morality, female license, are more numerous; suicides, murders, all ungovernable outbreaks of men's thoughts, embodying themselves in wild acts, take place more frequently, and with less horror to the lookers-on.(210)

Social organization, that regulatory force which gives comfort to the individual, in spite of its unnaturalness, is far preferable to chaos—to the wildness of a primitive state, or to the iciness of a solitary one. It is not that primitive man is morally inferior to his cultivated brother, but that he is not as well oriented to the outer "procession of life."

Finally, Hawthorne speaks with a modern voice in recognizing that environment helps determine the finished social product. "Space, a free atmosphere, and cleanliness have a vast deal to do with the possibilities of human virtue."(211) Man cannot be held totally responsible for a free shaping of his own life, for tradition and environment limit human potentialities. Heredity alone does not sufficiently account for the development of the individual. A muddy environment rarely produces white marble figurines.

Hawthorne is interested in the phenomenon of society as the superficial actuality of a binding human propensity; he is interested

in the complexity of the individual as he relates to that propensity and to that actuality; he is interested in the nature of the social way itself. Above all, he is enchanted by that which lies beneath and regulates the achievements of any social organization. However obligatory the existence of a man-made social order, however necessary that the individual participate therein, the system itself is viewed with a Rousseauistic disdain. It is at this point that the kinship with the French philosopher ends, however; for Hawthorne perceived human nature to be everywhere alike at all times. It is unfortunate but true that the noble savage, if left to himself, would evolve in due time a new society equal to the one now functioning with its characteristic short-sightedness.

#### Political Society

Although he was intimately linked with politics the last twenty-five years of his life, Hawthorne reacts in a decidedly negative, almost vitriolic manner, to political society. "It is only fair to say, however, that his political activity was motivated by financial necessity."<sup>49</sup> Had Hawthorne achieved the early recognition merited by his short stories, and had writing been sufficiently lucrative for a family man, he would probably have hesitated before accepting a political appointment. He was forced in earning a livelihood to enter the unlovely, materialistic realm of practical politics. "I do detest all offices—all, at least, that are held on a political tenure. And

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<sup>49</sup>Randall Stewart, "Hawthorne and Politics: Unpublished Letters to William B. Pike," New England Quarterly, V (April 1932), 239.

I want nothing to do with politicians—they are not men; they cease to be men, in becoming politicians."(212)

Hawthorne took little pride in his political duties. "How unlike, alas! the hang-dog look of a republican official, who, as the servant of the people, feels himself less than the least, and below the lowest, of his masters."(213)

An effect—which I believe to be observable, more or less, in every individual who has occupied the position—is, that, while he leans on the mighty arm of the Republic, his own proper strength departs from him. He loses, in an extent proportioned to the weakness or force of his original nature, the capability of self-support. If he possess an unusual share of native energy, or the enervating magic of place do not operate too long upon him, his forfeited powers may be redeemable.(214)

In contrast to Whig policy, Hawthorne, as a democrat of his times, advocates the Jeffersonian ideal of the least possible government. Both as a democrat and as a provincial New Englander, he preferred local and state sovereignty to a centralization of national powers.

Political salaries are seen to be somewhat tainted and fully capable of stifling initiative.

Uncle Sam's gold—meaning no disrespect to the worthy old gentleman—has, in this respect, a quality of enchantment like that of the Devil's wages. Whoever touches it should look well to himself, or he may find the bargain to go hard against him, involving, if not his soul, yet many of its better attributes; its sturdy force, its courage and constancy, its truth and self-reliance, and all that gives the emphasis to manly character.(215)

While the theory of democracy is the best one under which a people may govern themselves, democracy in practice abounds with smoke-filled rooms. "The popular voice, at the next gubernatorial election, though loud as thunder, will be really but an echo of what these gentlemen shall speak, under their breath, at your friend's festive board."(216)

Jonathan Chilley was the first friend to push Hawthorne into the political arena. After Franklin Pierce's election as President in 1852, the political future of the novelist was assured. Although Hawthorne served competently as a consul at Liverpool, he realized that the American political society was not especially wise in selecting its representatives.

An appointment of whatever grade, in the diplomatic or consular service of America, is too often what the English call a "job"; that is to say, it is made on private and personal grounds, without a paramount eye to the public good or the gentleman's especial fitness for the position.(217)

The patronage system, as it had blossomed after the Jackson administration, considered merit only accidentally. Hawthorne, in his downright honesty, lamented the sad state of affairs which bequeathed him the choice political plum of the Liverpool consulship.

Society surrounds man at every turn as an external home in which all must accustom themselves to a like degree. While it is preferable to no home, the solitary way, it is scarcely a warm residence. Hawthorne continually pushes aside the outer covering and looks beneath at those human limitations which permit only a factitious social structure. Yet, as an expedient of daily life, society is to be reckoned with above all other institutions. The individual must mask his face, march with the rest of mankind, adjust to man's ways, and conform to man's dictates. Not to do this is death.

## CHAPTER VI

### WOMEN

In the variety of her total role as idol, wife, homemaker, and mother, woman stands out as an institutional force in the Hawthornian world of ideas. She is significantly functional on both a physical and a spiritual level rather than merely ornamental. There can be no doubt that Hawthorne idealized woman—that he held her to be infinitely more ethereal than her male counterpart—yet interestingly enough the seemingly superficial structure of this ideal concept is rich in philosophical overtones.

Secluded domesticity, whose very core is womanhood, provides man with a most gracious compensation for the crass necessity of social participation. The domestic institution affords a partial release, the most universally accessible one, from an essentially somber compound. Although an old-fashioned approach to the gentle but complicated sex may well appear Victorian, unrealistic, or just plain naive—and it is admittedly all of these—it furnishes at the same time, through its fixing of woman's place in the over-all scheme of being, a wholesome array of ideas. The Hawthornian conception of womanhood,<sup>50</sup> however much it might disconcert the modern woman, has its roots in an

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<sup>50</sup>For the best discussion of the types of womanhood which Hawthorne portrays in his fiction see Randall Stewart's introduction to his edition of The American Notebooks, pp. lv-lxi.

imaginative morality rather than in prejudice. It is not out of hatred that the visible function of woman is to be limited, but out of respect. In truth, when looking beneath the surface, one sees the greater function of womanhood operating in an almost boundless sphere.

There is a temptation to dismiss numerous Hawthorne statements revealing a distaste for certain types of femininity—old women, fat women, ugly women, and, above all, "public" women—as a matter of personal taste. A far wiser view would consider his ill-natured remarks as typical responses born of a reverence for what was felt to be the true function of womanhood. When a Hawthornian precept is violated, the novelist is not long silent.

#### The Function of Women

While there is comparatively little inquiry into woman's biological, mental, and emotional make-up, there is an intense interest in the over-all function of the sex. "Woman's intellect should never give the tone to that of man; and even her morality is not exactly the material for masculine virtue."(218) The dividing line between male and female nature is a hard and fast one. Woman approaches that which is ethereal; man, if left to himself, that which is bestial. It is because woman is so dissimilar to man, not because she resembles him, that the two in union handsomely complement each other. Woman's tasks are not man's tasks; her ways are not his ways; her functions are not his functions. The male treads clumsily in mud, is forced into social, economical, and political thoroughfares; the female, a domestic creature, is comparatively sheltered from the harsh actualities of a

masculine world.

Hawthorne proposes a distinction between the ways of the head and the ways of the heart. In every eventuality he sides with the heart. The assertion that "it is only when the heart is touched that we become beings of reality" was not a reluctant one, for it betokens an intuitive and emotional acceptance of life rather than a merely rational one. In accord with this knowledge, woman, as a creature of the heart, is seen to be superior to man, a creature of the head. "Blessed be woman for her faculty of admiration, and especially for her tendency to admire with her heart, when man, at most, grants merely a cold approval with his mind!"(219) Woman, by virtue of her proximity to the primal source of all life, approaches spirituality in her earthly form. Mind alone is but coldness and error; heart alone furnishes truth and warmth. The two may unite, balance, and nourish one another in a proper wedding of the sexes.

In his love affair with Sophia, who appears to Hawthorne as a personification of all that is best in womanhood, he persistently idealizes the function of his betrothed. She is to serve both as a sanctified filter for the coarser attributes of man and as a visible symbol of the immortal state.

No one, whom you would deem worthy of your friendship, could enjoy so large a share of it as I do, without feeling the influence of your character throughout his own--purifying his aims and desires, enabling him to realize that this is a truer world than the feverish one around us, and teaching him how to gain daily entrance into that better world.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Love Letters, I, 5.

"The angel and apostle of the coming revelation must be a woman indeed, but lofty, pure, and beautiful; and wise, moreover, not through dusky grief, but the ethereal medium of joy; and showing how sacred love should make us happy, by the truest test of a life successful to such an end!"(220) For the first time, a notion of the spiritual quality of beauty intrudes itself. Hawthorne unfailingly links, or perchance confuses, beauty with virtue. While he is extremely fond of a beautiful and pure woman, for he sees in her that which is of the essence of angels, he cares little enough for an ugly woman no matter how virtuous she might be.

Woman, a protected creature, is to rely on her mate for the provision of physical necessities. She is not to become more mannish by intruding herself into ordained male functions, but is to ply the needle in domestic contentment. "It was the art--then, as now, almost the only one within a woman's grasp--of needlework."(221) As a woman moves away from her assigned realm, she becomes correspondingly less feminine, and infinitely less attractive to Hawthorne. "Women derive a pleasure, incomprehensible to the other sex, from the delicate toil of the needle."(222) Needlework is a woman's sphere; it provides her with sufficient artistic outlet. It is inconceivable that a woman could desire or need anything more--that she could be anything less than delighted with her homemaking chores.

In addition to her native talent for sewing, woman is endowed with the ability to raise and care for flowers. "This affection and sympathy for flowers is almost exclusively a woman's trait. Men, if

endowed with it by nature, soon lose, forget, and learn to despise it, in their contact with coarser things than flowers."(223) Woman is thus tightly limited in her sphere of mortal activity—not from a selfish desire to protect the male prerogative by stifling woman's outlets, but in a valiant effort to prohibit her contact with the crass, gray, worldly procession. Through protection and non-participation a woman continues to function in a pure and simple realm. Man, forced out of the home and into a full participation with all that is ignoble, invariably grows callous by contrast. Yet it is only fitting that man should shoulder his social obligations while striving at the same time to shield his wife.

Needlework, with its faintly artistic coloring, is enthusiastically pointed out as a safe and proper channel for feminine talent.

There is something extremely pleasant, and even touching,—at least, of very sweet, soft, and winning effect,—in this peculiarity of needlework, distinguishing women from men. Our own sex is incapable of any such byplay aside from the main business of life; but women—be they of what earthly rank they may, however gifted with intellect or genius, or endowed with awful beauty—have always some little handiwork ready to fill the tiny gap of every vacant moment.(224)

This tender plying of the needle unites woman with the more gentle interests of life, and thereby allows expression of her inmost nature. The womanhood of Hawthorne's day desired, or appeared to desire, little more freedom than Hawthorne would allow her. America, then, was substantially more of a patriarchy than at present. Although the ungentle voice of the "feminist" movement was beginning to make itself heard, traditional sentiment remained closer to the Hawthorne view.

Woman's place is perennially at home. In return for that sweet completeness which she provides, woman is man's responsibility. If she would but wholeheartedly trust herself to masculine protectiveness, then might her nature reach its fullest potential.

In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the apprehensiveness of women is quite gratuitous. Even as matters now stand, they are really safer in perilous situations and emergencies than men; and might be still more so, if they trusted themselves more confidently to the chivalry of manhood.(225)

While the feminine function is in some ways a limited one--especially in that needlework and flowers are considered sufficient outlets for artistic energies--still, in its primary duty as a complement to masculine nature, woman's role in the total drama looms equally as vital as man's. Woman, since she is predominately heart and hence more spiritual, shines forth as a purifying agent for all that is corrupt. By virtue of her traditionally sheltered way, woman retains more or less intact that which is childlike and divine.

#### Young Women

Throughout the great range of womanhood--from nuns to novelists--Hawthorne's special favorite was a beautiful young woman. Not a young woman alone, not a young and virtuous woman, but a "beautiful" young woman came to represent the zenith of perfection in this life.

Beauty always captivated him. Where there was beauty he fancied other good gifts must naturally be in possession. During his childhood homeliness was always repulsive to him. When a little boy he is remembered to have said to a woman who wished to be kind to him, "Take her away! She is ugly and fat, and has a loud voice."<sup>52</sup>

From childhood to death, Hawthorne harbored an almost abnormal detestation for that which was ugly.<sup>53</sup>

"But slight the change, sweet maids, to make angels of yourselves!"(226) Beauty is without caste, for it may flourish in a chamber maid as well as a princess. Wherever it chances to appear, the Hawthorne eye hastens to take note of it. "There is hardly another sight in the world so pretty as that of a company of young girls, almost women grown, at play, and so giving themselves up to their airy impulse that their tiptoes barely touch the ground."(227) Beautiful maidens are other earthly; they frolic lightly on the earth's surface in commemoration of a purer and higher beauty. Hawthorne is correctly thought of as a moral man; yet if he were forced to choose between a chaste ugliness and a slightly tainted beauty, there is little doubt of his choice.

In gay relief to male insensitiveness, woman thrives as a wild but delicate flower. The nature of young womanhood is a simple and free one; it is close to the heavens.

Girls are incomparably wilder and more effervescent than boys, more untamable, and regardless of rule and limit, with an ever-shifting variety, breaking continually into new modes of fun, yet with a harmonious propriety through all. Their steps, their voices, appear free as the wind, but keep consonance with a strain of music inaudible to us. Young men and boys, on the other hand,

<sup>52</sup>Fields, Yesterday With Authors, p. 67.

<sup>53</sup>Malcolm Cowley in his introduction to The Portable Hawthorne, (New York, 1948), p. 9 ff., advances the notion that Hawthorne's life pattern suggests the Narcissus complex. Although there appears to be some truth in the idea, the extent to which the Narcissus legend helps to explain Hawthorne is questionable.

play, according to recognized law, old, traditional games, permitting no caprices of fancy, but with scope enough for the outbreak of savage instincts. For, young or old, in play or in earnest, man is prone to be a brute.(228)

Hawthorne does not cherish the feminine sex in its totality. Numerous of his comments are highly critical. These derogatory criticisms of womanhood may be explainable in terms of artistic taste, or sometimes as mere squeamishness. This much is certain: Hawthorne elevates and idealizes the function of woman; he evidences an especial fondness for beautiful young women; and, in the best American manner, he places motherhood on the loftiest of pedestals.

#### Mother

The instincts of brotherhood and motherhood are among the nobler claims of humanity. If woman is to be associated with the "heart," then mother is pure heart. "But you must know a mother listens with her heart much more than with her ears; and thus she is often delighted with the trills of celestial music, when other people can hear nothing of the kind."(229) A mother is even closer to heaven than a beautiful young girl--she is, in fact, a visible embodiment of the motherly instinct in nature and of the caretaker instinct in God himself. "The Creator, apparently, has set a little of his own infinite wisdom and love (which are one) in a mother's heart, so that no child, in the common course of things, should grow up without some heavenly instruction.(230)

Elizabeth Manning Hawthorne, Nathaniel's mother, has been dramatically presented in biographical studies as a queer recluse.

The notion is a misguided one.

A mother who never showed herself, who never ate with her young children, would assuredly make enough of an impression by her strange behavior so that her children or relatives would mention it. But they do not.<sup>54</sup>

In truth, young Hawthorne cherished a very warm affection for his mother. He had written in 1821 to urge her not to move back to Salem.

If you remain where you are, think how delightful the time will pass with all your children around you, shut out from the world and nothing to disturb us. It will be a second garden of Eden.<sup>55</sup>

If a beautiful young woman may be considered as representative of an artistically perceived universe, then mother may be properly thought of as the epitome of womanhood in a morally perceived one. The relationship which existed between Nathaniel and his mother was much more normal than the early mythmaking biographers had supposed. It is quite certain that Hawthorne was fond of his own mother and that he was extremely loyal to motherhood as an ideal state.

#### Old Women

There is little harmony between Hawthorne's affection for young women and his disdain for old ones. In contrast to the glowing praise heaped on beauty, and to the sanctification bestowed on motherhood, old women are caustically dealt with. Certain old women were particularly repulsive.

Some old people, especially women, so age-worn and woeful are

<sup>54</sup>Manning Hawthorne, "Parental and Family Influences on Hawthorne," Essex Institute Historical Collections, LXXVI, 4.

<sup>55</sup>Manning Hawthorne, "Nathaniel Hawthorne Prepares for College," New England Quarterly, XI (March 1938), 87.

they, seem never to have been young and gay. It is easier to conceive that such gloomy phantoms were sent into the world as withered and decrepit as we behold them now, with sympathies only for pain and grief, to watch at death-beds and weep at funerals.(231)

Hawthorne's squeamishness over that which is old, fat, or ugly is an unwholesome one. It should be remembered, however, that young Nathaniel was raised by women until his college days, and that his associations with the Mannings were not always pleasant ones. He frequently lamented this unpleasantness in letters to his mother.

I am extremely homesick. Aunt Mary is continually scolding at me. Grandma hardly ever speaks a pleasant word to me. If I ever attempt to speak in my defense, they cry out against my impudence.<sup>56</sup>

Old women are inordinately stupid. In his fictional presentation of aged females, the novelist evidences little sympathy for their foibles.<sup>57</sup> Since old women are no longer capable of their ordained function—that of giving completeness to man—they pervert it by turning out pastries as a bribe to win undeserved affection from youth. "Old women never know how to show their kindness in any other way than by giving a man doughnuts and pumpkin pies, and such infernal trash."(232) It may well be that Hawthorne's recollection of grandmother Manning tempered his conception of all aged women.

Several possible explanations may be suggested for Hawthorne's love of beauty and for his twisted hatred of that which is unbeautiful. First, to an artistic Hawthorne, beauty may have appeared as a form of

<sup>56</sup>Manning Hawthorne, "Nathaniel Hawthorne Prepares for College," *New England Quarterly*, XI, 69.

<sup>57</sup>Hawthorne delights in poking fun at Miss Hepzibah Pyncheon of *The House of Seven Gables*.

earthly perfection, and all which did not measure up to its standard of the perfect was artistically repulsive. Second, a Hawthorne sprung from the Manning environment was worked upon from infancy by forces which might prejudice him against certain types of women. Third, in a sensual Hawthorne--and there are hints that the man was more warm-blooded than the novelist--the repressions occasioned by a thorough moralization of life may have found their release in a lust after beauty. Fourth, the worship of beauty may be attributed to fastidiousness or to an emotional aberration. Finally, and more in keeping with a philosophical Hawthorne, all deviations from a code of idealized womanhood--ugliness, plumpness, age--are seen as corruptions which merit abuse.

#### Public Women

Although Hawthorne's manifest hatred of the unbeautiful is undoubtedly a little strange, the vigor with which he attacked public women is much more understandable. He feared that the entrance of women into public life might well destroy woman by making her too much like man.

But there are portentous indications, changes gradually taking place in the habits and feelings of the gentle sex, which seem to threaten our posterity with many of those public women, whereof one was a burden too grievous for our fathers.(233)<sup>58</sup>

The antagonism toward public women, although it may seem to spring from petty jealousy or from an egotistical resentment of any encroachment on

<sup>58</sup>The woman referred to as a "burden too grievous" was Anne Hutchinson.

the male prerogatives, is, idealistically speaking, Hawthorne's way of defending what he considered to be the primal function of womanhood. He is attempting to protect his dream from would-be reformers and from time itself.

Woman's sex is a secret and holy one.

Fame does not increase the peculiar respect which men pay to female excellence, and there is a delicacy (even in rude bosoms, where few would think to find it) that perceives, or fancies, a sort of impropriety in the display of woman's natal mind to the gaze of the world, with indications by which its inmost secrets may be searched out.(234)

It is bad enough for a man to write of his inner longings, to spread his soul on foolscap, but when a woman comes naked to print she prostitutes all that is divine in her. That deepest mystery, woman's sex, Hawthorne never fathomed; he preferred to cloak those secrets and to declare them sacred rather than uncover them. When woman chose to unravel herself before his very eyes, Hawthorne was appalled.

"Then, the very nature of the opposite sex, or its long hereditary habit, which has become like nature, is to be essentially modified, before woman can be allowed to assume what seems a fair and suitable position."(235) Woman is so physically and spiritually constituted that she must modify her total being before attempting to change—even one degree—the traditional balance between herself and man. Although Hawthorne recognizes the need of a gradual improvement in the social position of women, he stands firmly declared against those feminists who would attempt immediate, forceful measures.

What amused and puzzled me was the fact, that women, however intellectually superior, so seldom disquiet themselves about the rights and wrongs of their sex, unless their own individual

affections chance to lie in idleness, or to be ill at ease. They are not natural reformers, but become such by the pressure of exceptional misfortune.(236)

A woman happily married, a mother, a woman fulfilling her natural function, is not concerned with breaking out of her designated sphere of action, but is instead thoroughly contented. It is only when woman is frustrated in the pursuit of her birthright, when she is either unfit for or neglected by the matrimonial state, that she sticks her nose where it does not belong.

Although any type of public woman is capable of raising Hawthorne's ire, women who attempt to write provoke the greatest contempt. "What a strange propensity it is in these scribbling women to make a show of their hearts, as well as their heads, upon your counter, for anybody to pry into that chooses!"(237) The novelist had difficulty in accustoming himself to the idea that women could write. Since women are to be thought of as delicate, protected creatures, indelicate feminine overtures are unduly shocking. To compete with women in print is especially distasteful. In a letter to his friend and publisher, William Ticknor, the novelist speaks his mind.

Besides, America is now wholly given over to a d---d mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash—and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed.<sup>59</sup>

Writing is a brutal job, which women, since they are to be protected from life's roughness, in no way qualify for. Let women stick to their

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<sup>59</sup>Caroline Ticknor, Hawthorne and His Publisher (New York, 1913), p. 141.

knitting and leave the indelicate process of composition to the male.

By 1855, Hawthorne was willing to admit that some few women were capable of the manly art of writing. He warmly espoused the cause of Delia Bacon, and financed, with considerable personal loss, the publication of her controversial book on the origin of Shakespeare's plays. For the most part, however, he continued to chide female authors.

Generally women write like emasculated men, and are only to be distinguished from male authors by greater feebleness and folly; but when they throw off the restraints of decency, and come before the public stark naked, as it were—then their books are sure to possess character and value.(238)

There are, then, a few vigorous women who are disposed by their very natures to function boldly as men. This does not mean to suggest that the average woman should try her hand at writing. "Women are too good for authorship, and that is the reason it spoils them so."(239) Since she is recognized to be intrinsically better than man, and since her functional realm lies above and apart from the hard one of authorship, woman corrupts and is herself corrupted when she erroneously attempts to become an author.

Women must be freed from the cumbersome regulations imposed upon them by society before they are admitted to wider spheres of endeavor. With age and with experience, Hawthorne grew more tolerant of women who defied his special standards. Perhaps he had become more practical and less idealistic about womanhood in general. The awakening of a "new" womanhood, although it is still regarded as something of a nightmare, is no longer attacked.

(The customs of artistic life bestow such liberty upon the sex, which is elsewhere restricted within so much narrower limits; and it is perhaps an indication that, whenever we admit women to a wider scope of pursuits and professions, we must also remove the shackles of our present conventional rules, which would become an insufferable restraint on either maid or wife.(240))

The character of transcendental reform was illustrated by its fervent agitation for the enfranchisement of women, and for the enlargement of their sphere of duty and privilege.<sup>60</sup> In conjunction with the arrival of the "public" woman onto the American scene, it is not unlikely that Hawthorne came to find her symbolized—found the embodiment of all that was most unpalatable to him—in Margaret Fuller. The ungentlemanly slandering of Miss Fuller's character, while it is not easily excused, may be partially understood in that Margaret must have appeared to Hawthorne as the most flagrant violator of his ideal womanhood. She was not especially noted for physical beauty; she wrote, she edited, she preached "feminism"; she was garrulous. The presence of even one of these attributes would scarcely ingratiate her with Hawthorne. Packaged together they proved far too much. Margaret's virtue, intelligence, and literary accomplishments fade from view when placed beside numerous other bumptious qualities which must have made her extremely obnoxious to one with Hawthorne's ideals. Hawthorne, as a defender of the faith, was loath to give way before those forces which Margaret personified—forces which were hacking away at the very basis of womanhood in an effort to improve the finished product.

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<sup>60</sup>Octavius Brooks Frothingham, Transcendentalism in New England (New York, 1886), p. 175.

Women in General

Hawthorne was fond of remarking on the status of present day woman, fond of remarking on feminine psychology—however little he may have understood it—and fond of reflecting on the nature of women in general. These miscellaneous observations, while they are seldom profound, shed some additional light on Hawthorne's inquiry into womanhood. Occasionally, in an effort to be amusing rather than serious, Hawthorne tries his hand at phrase-making.

In her youth, a woman goes to the glass to see how pretty she is; in her age, she consults it, to assure herself that she is not so hideous as she might be. She gets into a passion with it, but dies before she can make up her mind to break it.(241)

There is no aversion on Hawthorne's part to commenting rather frankly, rather personally, on feminine apparel. "A white stocking is infinitely more effective than a black one."(242)

New England women of Hawthorne's time were felt to be measurably weaker than their Puritan prototypes.

Morally, as well as materially, there was a coarser fiber in those wives and maidens of old English birth and breeding, than in their fair descendants, separated from them by a series of six or seven generations; for, throughout that chain of ancestry, every successive mother has transmitted to her child a fainter bloom, a more delicate and briefer beauty, and a slighter physical frame, if not a character of less force and solidity, than her own.(243)

Although the present day woman is fairer to the eye, she has weakened in her moral function as mother and homemaker—has become feeble in that which is most vital to womanhood. Sharp functional lines which formerly distinguished the sexes are rapidly vanishing. "We seldom meet with women nowadays, and in this country, who impress us as being women at all,—their sex fades away, and goes for nothing, in ordinary

intercourse."(244)

Certain commonplace psychological phenomena of the feminine world are recorded from time to time.

A brilliant woman is often an object of the devoted admiration--it might almost be termed worship, or idolatry--of some young girl, who perhaps beholds the cynosure only at an awful distance, and has as little hope of personal intercourse as of climbing among the stars of heaven. We men are too gross to comprehend it. Even a woman, of mature age, despises or laughs at such a passion.(245)

In one instance, Hawthorne takes up the challenge of woman's limited opportunity for self-expression.

It is nonsense, and a miserable wrong,—the result, like so many others, of masculine egotism,—that the success or failure of woman's existence should be made to depend wholly on the affections, and on one species of affection, while man has such a multitude of other chances, that this seems but an incident. For its own sake, if it will do no more, the world should throw open all its avenues to the passport of a woman's bleeding heart.(246)

If her existence is so intimately linked with affairs of the heart, then a failure in those affairs—spinsterhood or widowhood— forfeits a woman's birthright—her total excuse for being. There is evidence that there were few respectable career women in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Once a woman goes ever so slightly wrong in the matter of sexual morality, she has crossed the line for all eternity.

A woman's chastity consists, like an onion, of a series of coats. You may strip off the outer ones without doing much mischief, perhaps none at all; but you keep taking off one after another, in expectation of coming to the inner nucleus, including the whole value of the matter. It proves, however, that there is no such nucleus, and that chastity is diffused through the whole series of coats, is lessened with the removal of each, and vanishes with the final one, which you supposed would introduce you to the hidden pearl.(247)

A woman must be either purest white or deepest scarlet, for there are no hybrid hues. Plump matrons receive a final harsh upbraiding.

I wonder whether a middle-aged husband ought to be considered as legally married to all the accretions that have overgrown the slenderness of his bride, since he led her to the altar, and which make her so much more than he ever bargained for!(248)

Hawthorne's understanding of women was far from a complete one. Although he understood well enough what he admired and what he hated in the sex, womanhood's true nature proved elusive. He was never quite able to break through, in the manner of a Flaubert, into the internal mainspring of femininity. Perhaps the actual was hidden by the formidable structure of his ideal.

#### Marriage and the Home

The force of the domestic institution parallels in many ways that of religion and society. Yet significant as marriage may be, it is frequently a ready source for proverbial humor. "A man and his wife should never both be angry at once."(249) More often, though, Hawthorne is in dead earnest when he stops to reflect on the domestic state.

But, blessed be God, whether our habitation be a cave, a hut, a lodge of skins, or a marble palace, the name of home has a hallowing influence which renders it the only spot on earth where true comfort may be found.(250)

Home, and all that the word suggests—woman, marriage, children, the fireside—stands as a warm refuge, a partial exit, from the discomfiture of grosser actualities. Home has something of that same purifying quality found in a beautiful woman. It comforts man—man stained through his necessary outer contacts—with its wholesome warmth. In

truth, home is man's second womb, heaven his third. As an intermediate realm between heaven and earth, home provides the best refuge accessible to man.

Marriage, for which the home exists, is a miraculous entity in that its very presence glosses over an infinitude of imperfections.

A kind Providence has so skilfully adapted sex to sex and the mass of individuals to each other, that, with certain obvious exceptions, any male and female may be moderately happy in the married state. The true rule is to ascertain that the match is fundamentally a good one, and then to take it for granted that all minor objections, should there be such, will vanish, if you let them alone. Only put yourself beyond hazard as to real basis of matrimonial bliss, and it is scarcely to be imagined what miracles, in the way of recognizing smaller incongruities, connubial love will effect.(251)

Minor adjustments automatically effect themselves. It is not so much that one man is made for one woman but that the sexes are destined to form one unit. The domestic state, then, is the only fitting one if the two sexes are to function properly.

"It appears to me that matrimonial deaths affect men more than women."(252) Here, Hawthorne elects to comment on the inner or spiritual strength of woman which enables her to carry on under stress. In his own marriage with Sophia, the devoted husband had come to know such bliss that even a temporary absence from his spouse was felt to be unbearable. "What is the use of going to bed at all, in solitude?"(253) While Hawthorne repeatedly idealizes marriage, his total conception is not without its physical origins. In a letter to his friend Bridge, a leap into matrimony is heartily urged. "If you want a new feeling in this weary life, get married. It renews the world from the surface to the centre.<sup>61</sup>

In later years, when Sophia was designated "Momma" rather than "Dove," it is possible that the husband, no longer a young lover, had grown a little wary of marital perfectibility. "It is good to see how every body, up to this old age of the world, takes an interest in weddings, and seems to have a faith that now, at last, a couple have come together to make each other happy."(254) There is no evidence of Hawthorne's becoming cynical about marriage. He continued to his death to recognize marriage as the richest of human experiences. Intellectually, he conceived of it as a joyous release, one open to all men, from an overwhelming solemnity.

High above the muddy necessity of social intercourse, marriage erects her marble cathedral. Each marriage is a working expression of that brotherhood of the heart which should ideally exist among all mankind, were it not for the unfortunate failings of human nature. In the midst of confusion, marriage stands as the physical and spiritual earthly fulfillment of that which is best in humanity.

#### Children

Hawthorne was inordinately fond of children. He played games with his own brood; when they were absent, he wrote long childish letters concerning their doll's health; in short, he attempted to spoil them whenever and however possible. Although Hawthorne understood the nature of children well enough to write stories for them,<sup>62</sup> his comments

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<sup>61</sup>Horatio Bridge, Personal Recollections of Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York, 1893), p. 95.

<sup>62</sup>Hawthorne's three books of children's stories, which were

on children, though they sometimes strike a deep psychological note, are rather commonplace ones.

If there is one idea to be found, it is that children are closer to heaven than adults—not that they are more recently born, but that their pure and joyous nature is closer to the divine one. Ominous forces centered on adult beings make the desirable retention of that nature impossible.

When our infancy is almost forgotten, and our boyhood long departed, though it seems but as yesterday; when life settles darkly down upon us, and we doubt whether to call ourselves young any more, then it is good to steal away from the society of bearded men, and even of gentler woman, and spend an hour or two with children.(255)

The free state of childhood reflects that which is basic and uncorrupted in human nature. Yet it must move unceasingly forward into adult life, there to disappear. Children, together with beautiful young women, and mothers, form an earthly trinity to which a Unitarian Hawthorne may give allegiance. In this one way, then, the exploration of children's nature fits into the over-all development of Hawthorne's thought.

"The young have less charity for aged follies than the old for those of youth."(256) Youth and age are frequently placed in psychological contrast. Whereas age may allow for the vagaries of youth; youth, having yet to live in the formidable adult world, is seldom capable of projecting itself beyond its scope. Having once passed through the middle years, man in his autumnal time returns to a

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framed on classical myths--A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys, Tanglewood Tales, and The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair—met with popular success.

state somewhat similar to that of his youth.

Externally, the jollity of aged men has much in common with the mirth of children; the intellect, any more than a deep sense of humor, has little to do with the matter; it is, with both, a gleam that plays upon the surface, and imparts a sunny and cheery aspect alike to the green branch, and gray, mouldering trunk. In one case, however, it is real sunshine; in the other, it more resembles the phosphorescent glow of decaying wood.(257)

Since children are essentially unworldly, since they are a part of the Hawthornian trinity, their psychological make-up is one which allows for extremely sensitive perception—for direct knowledge through an intuition of the heart. "Children have always a sympathy in the agitations of those connected with them; always, especially, a sense of any trouble or impending revolution, of whatever kind, in domestic circumstances."(258) "Children possess an unestimated sensibility to whatever is deep or high, in imagination or feeling, so long as it is simple, likewise. It is only the artificial and the complex that bewilder them."(259) The child is man in a natural state, a state capable of intuiting those subtiles which lie beneath the surface. "Children are even more apt, if possible, than grown people, to catch the contagion of a panic terror."(260)

The father of three spent endless hours reading to his children. "But children have no mercy nor consideration for anybody's weariness; and if you had but a single breath left, they would ask you to spend it in telling them a story."(261) For Hawthorne, children exist in a state which it would be preferable for them to retain; they dwell in what should rightfully be man's natural state. Yet the child is an uninitiate. That unavoidable initiation which lies ahead will almost

invariably separate him from ethereal ties. Thus the introduction of a child into adulthood echoes the necessary movement of a sensitive soul into society. Both entrances are equally painful.

### Love

The love of one individual for another actuates on a lower plane the divine love of God for man. Love is that emotional actuality upon which marriage and the home are based. It gives meaning to the life of a woman. It is, in fact, the most elevated positive force at work in man's universe. In any of its forms—in brotherhood or betrothal—it guides man to the summit of earthly achievement. It brings to man a new insight in accordance with which he may better orient himself to life.

Though man's propensity for sin is an abiding one, love, even in its mortal form, is capable of effectively battling man's grosser tendencies. Love is not selfishly worshiped by Hawthorne for its own sake, but is thought of, instead, in terms of the functional good which it might inspire. If love should, in some distant day, reach the ascendancy in man's nature, then would life's compound whiten, then would the glaring discrepancy between man's heavenly and his earthly estate appear less insurmountable.

"Oh, how stubbornly does love,—or even that cunning semblance of love which flourishes in the imagination, but strikes no depth of root into the heart,—how stubbornly does it hold its faith until the moment comes when it is doomed to vanish into thin mist!"(262) The sheer unspeakable power of love, when given free reign, is anxious to

combat evil's malignant forces. Love's magic chain is a functional one: "Love, whether newly born, or aroused from a death-like slumber, must always create a sunshine, filling the heart so full of radiance, that it overflows upon the outward world."(263) Under the spell of love, the mud about man, though still present, is no longer so darkly seen. Each flickering stimulus of love's glow renews life from the inside out.

Love is wholly from the heart, fully as unlettered as religion; and thus the warning: "Let men tremble to win the hand of woman, unless they win along with it the utmost passion of her heart!"(264) Whereas love originates in the animal heart of man, when seen in its more spiritual form it provides for the intermingling of souls. It is this deeper aspect which Hawthorne stresses in his passion for Sophia.

And thus it will go on; until we shall be divested of these earthly forms, which are at once our medium of expression, and the impediments to full communion. Then we shall melt into [one] another, and all be expressed, once and continually, without a word—without an effort.<sup>63</sup>

Since the spirituality of love is a matter of the soul rather than the physical heart, man's body is again viewed as a stumbling block to finality. Although earthly love radiates a bliss which glosses over all, the greater miracle of spiritual love penetrates to the Hawthornian reality.

In what is perhaps his most optimistic statement on human nature, Hawthorne seems to feel that love is more native to man than hate. This need not imply that good is more native than evil.

It is to the credit of human nature, that, except where its

<sup>63</sup>Love Letters, II, 74.

selfishness is brought into play, it loves more readily than it hates. Hatred, by a gradual and quiet process, will even be transformed to love, unless the change be impeded by a continually new irritation of the original feeling of hostility.(265)

In a standard psychological proposal the two emotions are seen to be of one essence.

It is a curious subject of observation and inquiry, whether hatred and love be not the same thing at bottom. Each, in its utmost development, supposes a high degree of intimacy and heart-knowledge; each renders one individual dependent for the food of his affections and spiritual life upon another; each leaves the passionate lover, or the no less passionate hater, forlorn and desolate by the withdrawal of his subject. Philosophically considered, therefore, the two passions seem essentially the same, except that one happens to be seen in a celestial radiance, and the other in a dusky and lurid glow.(266)

There is an incessant insistence on the strength of love, and on the power for good latent in that strength.

The one weakness of love is that it is a passion, and that as a passion it depends on a finite object; thus while it flames for the moment it is quickly extinguished by time. True love reaches a more fixed state, but true love lies in God's domain, an infinite one.

Impermanent, though frequently celestial, eruptions of love are allotted to man's dominion, a depraved and finite one. Since the disease of the life compound is a latent one, however much whiteness love manages to mix therein, still, life is expected to lapse into its original grayness.

Both love and hatred have unfathomable depths. Each instance of a deeper love stands forth as the first of its kind to its participants, and precludes penetration by other mortals. "One feels the fact, in an instant, when he has intruded on those who love or

those who hate, at some acme of their passion that puts them into a sphere of their own, where no other spirit can pretend to stand on equal ground with them."(267)

While God's love is permanent, and while man when he participates in spiritual love grasps something of that same finality, man's love is normally limited in that it centers on a physical object. It is, then, a passion at its roots. Although man may move from this earthly passion to a more divine one, still he is limited by the origin of his desire.

Man's love, as in the marital state, has no claim to permanence, but must instead continually renew itself. "Caresses, expressions of one sort or another, are necessary to the life of the affections, as leaves are to the life of a tree. If they are wholly restrained, love will die at the roots."(268) Hawthorne, in his warm concern with the successful perpetuation of marital love, recognizes unstintingly that the original force of man's love is not a self-continuing one, that it is by nature transitory. "Caresses are the foliage of affection; the plant dies at the root unless it has them."(269)

In spite of the acknowledged limitations of earthly love, Hawthorne wholeheartedly affirms the indestructible character of its spiritual counterpart; and in so affirming recognizes that the actuality of love necessitates--in a brighter manner than the imperfect quality of man's earthly state--the immortality of man's soul. Thus the presence of love in life becomes an assurance of God. In truth, any and all of Hawthorne's oft pondered opinions lead to this assurance. Love proves

its immortality by sheer force.

Each warmer and quicker throb of the heart wears away so much of life. The passions, the affections, are a wine not to be indulged in. Love, above all, being in its essence an immortal thing, cannot be long contained in an earthly body, but would wear it out with its own secret power, softly invigorating as it seems. (270)

In general, Hawthorne begins with what he sees before him of man and his antics, with the actual ingredients of life, and with the institutional forces playing upon man and those ingredients. When he idealizes, as in his conception of womanhood, he is seeing what, in the light of the greater whole, actually should be. In the disparity between what should be and what is, various Hawthorne problems arise—the problem of the sensitive soul, the artificial social structure, the public woman. These are problems rising out of a condition, and thus they are of concern to Hawthorne. These problems are seen and lamented; but the conditions from which they arise—sin, the life compound, fortune—are taken as actualities destined to remain unchanged by man's rather petty attempts at self-reform. It is always through the heart and soul, and thus through love, that life's prenatal conditions are to be most effectively combated—not that the conditions themselves will be substantially altered, but that man may rise somewhat above those conditions by directing his energies to divine channels.

## CHAPTER VII

### ART AND THE ARTIST

An artist ascends above the earth's surface on the wings of his art; there he dwells in the land of the beautiful. Art is more than the channeled outpouring of energies, more than a designed effect. Art, to Hawthorne, is that vital outlet through which man may escape surface substances by lifting himself into a realm of created beauty. The artist, then, discovers the beautiful, and creates—in one of the art forms—a representation of that discovery. This tendency to idealize does not lead Hawthorne to regard the art realm as one apart from or superior to ordinary life. On the contrary, art is a practical concern both in its period of creation and in its final form. The medium is a conscious one in which the artist picks up the raw matter of this world, fires and shapes it with his imagination, and returns it to earth for man's pleasure and edification.

An acute characterization of the sundry types of art, and of the mediums, methods, and ideals of art, states a definite set of Hawthornian standards. Yet the commentary on art, while it tends to be complete within itself, is actually but one more phase of the novelist's total orientation to life. A knowledge of Hawthorne as artist, coupled with a knowledge of those ideals which he set for himself and for the entire art brotherhood, though essential in every way to an understanding of Hawthorne, should not be allowed to

represent the complete man. However much Hawthorne emphasizes art, however much potential he allows it, still it must be remembered that he stresses sin, fortune, and society with equal vigor. Hawthorne was not an "art for art's sake" addict. In truth, art, when kept in its proper perspective, may well be thought of, together with women, as a second "good" institution, as a second partial escape from what remains—however it may be turned about—a gray compound.

#### Architecture

Hawthorne did not confine his critique of art to the only phase which he himself practiced—fiction. He felt himself a member of a community in art, for which the standard mediums—architecture, sculpture, poetry, prose, and painting—were but forms and not the thing itself. Music alone failed to interest him. He had no ear for it; he never troubled to reflect upon it. Art is of one essence no matter what visible form it takes. The artist, in the plying of his genius, is one of a brotherhood at work upon the same spiritual substance. Thus it is that Hawthorne assumed a perfect freedom in commenting on art fields where his technical knowledge was undeniably limited; and thus it is that he came to see art as a whole, and each of its parts and problems as a division of that greater being.

The commentary on architecture centers upon a comparison of the relative merits of the classical and the Gothic styles. For Hawthorne the romancer, for one who saw life through a glass darkly, classicism suffers in the comparison.

I always see a great beauty and lightsomeness in these classic

and Grecian edifices, though they seem cold and intellectual, and not to have their mortar moistened with human life-blood, nor to have the mystery of human life in them, as Gothic structures do.(271)

The Gothic, in its irregular, mysterious, and suggestive presence, has about it the spirit of humanity—for life does not flow in neat and readily discernible lines. Classical architecture with its regular features and smoothly shaven face is necessarily viewed as a mannequin.

"There is something, I do not know what, but it is in the region of the heart, rather than in the intellect, that Italian architecture, of whatever age or style, never seems to reach."(272) Hawthorne brings his heart and head symbolism into the realm of art. Classicism is of the intellect, thus cold, stately, and artificial. The Gothic, coming from the heart of man, is genuine and vibrant. Gothic architecture with its irregular disproportioned minutiae offers a hat rack for man's feelings, while the classical is so smoothly constructed that there is little opportunity to fasten oneself to it. "Classical architecture is nothing but an outline, and affords no little points, no interstices where human feelings may cling and overgrow it like ivy."(273) When working up certain classical tales for children's stories, Hawthorne wrote Fields of his intention to superimpose the Gothic element.

Unless I greatly mistake, these old fictions will work up admirably for the purpose; and I shall aim at substituting a tone in some degree Gothic or romantic, or any such tone as may best please myself, instead of the classic coldness, which is as repellent as the touch of marble.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>64</sup>Fields, Yesterday with Authors, p. 59.

The old principle of variety within uniformity is fundamental to the nature of the Gothic. Gothic structures call to mind the inscrutable order of life, or the apparent machinations of fortune within the greater framework of providential guidance. There is empathy on Hawthorne's part for an art which is truly life-like, but apathy for those styles which would refine away life's basic roughness. In his finest statement of Gothic supremacy, the author grows rhapsodic over what he felt to be Gothicism's overpowering richness.

A Gothic cathedral is surely the most wonderful work which mortal man has yet achieved, so vast, so intricate, and so profoundly simple, with such strange, delightful recesses in its grand figure, so difficult to comprehend within one idea, and yet all so consonant that it ultimately draws the beholder and his universe into its harmony. It is the only thing in the world that is vast enough and rich enough.(274)

There is much to be learned from Hawthorne's appraisal of the Gothic. Although he continues to employ the Gothic-classical distinction in the several fields of art, his judgment is sufficiently established in his pronouncements on architecture. In siding with the Gothic, the romancer pledges allegiance to those elements which are grandiose, mysterious, and suggestive in life. He reacts against that which is superficially ordered by man's intellect. He reacts, too, against what he feels to be the coldness and sterility of the classical form. He elects the imagination over the reason, intuition over intellective knowledge. In accepting the Gothic standards, Hawthorne makes the inevitable choice to which his philosophy of life predestines him. For one who wrote, and in a sense thought and lived, in a preternatural realm, no other choice was possible.

Sculpture

Architecture, sculpture, and painting fell under the critical eye of Hawthorne during the last ten years of his life. Having arrived late, and having perfected certain theories of art in his fiction, the observations which the novelist offers are of one stamp, and nowise constitute a learned criticism of the subject at hand. Now and again they evidence, as might well be expected, unfeigned Puritan prejudices. All of these criticisms are significant, however, in that they help clarify Hawthorne's warmly held art theory.

"I doubt whether sculptors do not err, in point of taste, by making all their statues models of physical perfection, instead of expressing by them the individual character and habits of the man." (275) Here, when dealing with a new species of art, the typical distinction between the Gothic and the classical is extended. Blemished individuality, singularity and uniqueness, are cherished above uniformity and perfection. Typical, too, is the gentle irony with which Hawthorne defends his prejudices.

It seems to me time to leave off sculpturing men and women naked; they mean nothing, and might as well be one name as another, and belong to the same category as the ideal portraits in Books of Beauty, or in the windows of print-shops. The art does not naturally belong to this age; and the exercise of it, I think, had better be confined to the manufacture of marble fireplaces. (276)

In one instance, Hawthorne is led to heap praise on ancient sculpture. "In short, I do really believe that there was an excellence in ancient sculpture, and that it has yet a potency to educate and refine the minds of those who look at it, even so carelessly and casually as I do." (277) The immense dream of perfectibility impressed

in each piece of ancient sculpture is not without its significance. Yet as a matter of common decency, the sculpturing of nude figures is inexcusable in modern times.

I do not altogether see the necessity of ever sculpturing another nakedness. Man is no longer a naked animal; his clothes are as natural to him as his skin, and sculptors have no more right to undress him than to flay him. (278)

It is difficult to separate a person's ideas concerning art from his emotional response to art objects, for the two elements are inextricably fused in nonprofessional art criticism.

Marble's awesome coldness, if it fails to strike the proper chord, leaves the spectator wholly unmoved.

It is also strange that, unless when one feels the ideal charm of a statue, it becomes one of the most tedious and irksome things in the world. Either it must be a celestial thing or an old lump of stone, dusty and time-soiled, and tiring out your patience with eternally looking just the same. (279)

"It seems to me, however, that old sculpture affects the spirits even more dolefully than old painting; it strikes colder to the heart, and lies heavier upon it, being marble, than if it were merely canvas." (280) The sheer physical weight of the sculptor's raw material often lends itself to a heavy and uninspiring flatness in the finished art piece.

Since the durability of marble allows for a kind of permanence all its own, the sculptor who would meddle with it has a sacred charge of finding and representing beauty and truth. Since the relative position of the sculptor as an artist is an elevated one, his spiritual duties are clearly defined.

(A sculptor, indeed, to meet the demands which our preconceptions make upon him, should be even more indispensably a poet than those who deal in measured verse and rhyme. His material, or instrument,

which serves him in the stead of shifting and transitory language, is a pure, white, undecaying substance. It insures immortality to whatever is wrought in it, and therefore makes it a religious obligation to commit no idea to its mighty guardianship, save such as may repay the marble for its faithful care, its incorruptible fidelity, by warming it with an ethereal life.(281)

Finally, Hawthorne comes to remark, and not without some justification, that the road to fame for the sculptor, or even the road to survival, is a hotly contested one. While the notion of a penniless poet is traditional enough, the vision of a starving sculptor laboring throughout a cold and thankless life is equally romantic.

(Thus, success in art is apt to become partly an affair of intrigue; and it is almost inevitable that even a gifted artist should look askance at his gifted brother's fame, and be chary of the good word that might help him to sell still another statue or picture. You seldom hear a painter heap generous praise on anything in his special line of art; a sculptor never has a favorable eye for any marble but his own.(282)

It is not so much out of jealousy, but because of the limited worldly success open to the entire brotherhood, that the sculptor necessarily becomes vain about his own work. The more limited the market, the less the trader is apt to love his brother competitor.

Although sculptural tasks are difficult, and though popular success is extremely rare, Hawthorne does not place the deserving sculptor on a pedestal equal to that of the painter and poet. In spite of the fact that sculptors frequently succeed in carving ideals into their marble, the novelist does not look on the sculpturesque with a warm eye. The great shortcoming of sculpture is that it fails too often to capture the whole of life—that it contents itself with an ideal but often meaningless form.

Painting

If Hawthorne was often jaded by the art galleries of Italy, it was not due to any lack of technical merit in the displayed paintings, but to the poverty of his technical knowledge. Yet, though Hawthorne admittedly had little cultivated taste for painting, his criticism is far from an unperceptive one. He manages to go behind the picture itself and query the true nature of the medium.

The observations on painting tend to be repetitious, but the very presence of that repetition advances in irrevocable terms Hawthorne's conviction that painting has limitless art potential; that the spectator's reaction to painting is a relative one; that pictorial genius is quite rare; and that paintings should be studied individually rather than in mass. From the point of view of an interested onlooker, the heaping together of paintings is an insufferable affront to human intelligence.

What an absurdity it would seem, to pretend to read two or three hundred poems, of all degrees between an epic and a ballad, in an hour or two! And a picture is a poem, only requiring the greater study to be felt and comprehended, because the spectator must necessarily do much for himself towards that end. (283)

Since each worthwhile picture necessitates a long and deliberate perusal, art galleries are viewed as blatant monstrosities.

There should never be more than one picture in a room, nor more than one picture to be studied in a day; galleries of pictures are surely the greatest absurdities that ever were contrived; there being no excuse for them, except that it is the only way in which pictures can be made generally available and accessible. (284)

"With the most lifelike reproduction, there is no illusion. I think if a semi-obscenity were thrown over the picture, after finishing

it to this nicety, it might bring it nearer to Nature."(285)

Hawthorne insists, and he practices the precept in his own fiction, that a veil is necessary to give man the feel of the suggestive and mysterious quality of life, and that a mere photographing of the phenomenal in no way suffices. Since the true nature of life is opaque, except in rare moments of contact with "reality," that art which would allot any degree of finality to the merely visual deludes itself. A picture should embody something "more real than man can see with the eye and touch with the finger"; it should never content itself with a reproduction of the apparent.

One proverbial dictum so variously phrased and so often repeated that it grows wearisome warns that talent is not genius. "Pictorial talent seems to be abundant enough, up to a certain point; pictorial genius, I should judge, is among the rarest of gifts."(286) Talent for painting, like the oil which is employed, is but an ingredient of the finished product. While talent is undeniably necessary, it is genius which instills a spiritual life into art creations.

I am of the opinion that good pictures are quite as rare as good poets; and I do not see why we should pique ourselves on admiring any but the very best. One in a thousand, perhaps, ought to live in the applause of men from generation to generation, till its colors fade or blacken out of sight, and its canvas rots away; the rest should be put in garrets, or painted over by newer artists, just as tolerable poets are shelved when their little day is over.(287)

Hawthorne's bewailing of the lack of genius among the painting brotherhood is but a particularization of a larger idea. He felt, and often gives expression to this feeling, that the number of true

geniuses throughout world history might well be counted on one's fingers and toes. Mediocrity and mere talent are abundant enough, but that vital perceptive spark which moves toward immortality is a rarity.

"It depresses the spirits to go from picture to picture, leaving a portion of your vital sympathy at every one, so that you come, with a kind of half-torpid desperation, to the end." (288) Each great picture pulls internally on its observer. The nature of painting is seen to be a powerful one; its effect is not unlike the catharsis so well defined by Aristotle. On occasion, Hawthorne was tempted to rank painting as first among the arts. "It is my present opinion that the pictorial art is capable of something more like magic, more wonderful and inscrutable in its methods than poetry, or any other mode of developing the beautiful." (289) More frequently, he hands the laurel to the poet.

It is this that all the arts have in common; it is the striving toward the beautiful which ties the bond of brotherhood. It should be remembered that Hawthorne's conception of "beauty" elevates it above mere surface prettiness—that beauty in this world is but a harbinger of a "reality" or spirituality which is yet to come. A statue, a poem, or a painting which does not move toward the beautiful has no worth, and were better left undone.

An observer needs to be alone with an art object in order to communicate with it on its own terms. "It is a terrible business, this looking at pictures, whether good or bad, in the presence of the artists who paint them; it is as great a bore as to hear a poet read

his own verses." (290) It may be remembered, too, that Hawthorne does not attribute intrinsic merit to the antique. Each generation has its own life to lead--its own problems and aspirations to express. Forms which spoke forcibly to past ages may well have lost their ability to stir the present.

In painting, as in literature, I suspect there is something in the productions of the day that takes the fancy more than the works of any past age,—not greater merit, nor nearly so great, but better suited to this very present time. . . . (291)

"But as regards the interpretation of this, or of any other profound picture, there are likely to be as many interpretations as there are spectators." (292) Hawthorne sets forth relativistic tenets in his criticisms on the several arts. Spectator opinion is held to be relative in regard to each art object. A work of art cannot demand one standard opinion from its audience. Yet to say that Hawthorne was a relativist in the Anatole France sense of the word would be to leap to unwarranted conclusions. It is difficult to see how one who believed in a "reality" which was the same for all mankind could countenance relativism. It may be that Hawthorne was too aware of his untutored critical sense. If he did not see in a great painting or a famous piece of sculpture what others had seen, what was accepted as being there, relativistic comments might provide an easy outlet for the feeling of uncertainty fostered by that lack of technical knowledge. It is more probable that art is seen to be relative only in that it is profoundly rich. Thus a magnificent piece of art work, by virtue of the depth which makes its greatness, may evoke a multitude of individual responses.

Once more the monotonous proclamation of the scarcity of true genius is presented.

[One picture in ten thousand, perhaps, ought to live in the applause of mankind, from generation to generation, until the colors fade and blacken out of sight, or the canvas rot entirely away. For the rest, let them be piled in garrets, just as the tolerable poets are shelved, when their little day is over. Is a painter more sacred than a poet? (293)]

As a final statement on painting, the novelist advances a theory not unlike one later held by Croce. It is scarcely a new idea even in 1860, but Hawthorne gives it a remarkably fresh phraseology.

[A picture, however admirable the painter's art, and wonderful his power, requires of the spectator a surrender of himself, in due proportion with the miracle which has been wrought. Let the canvas glow as it may, you must look with the eye of faith, or its highest excellence escapes you. There is always the necessity of helping out the painter's art with your own resources of sensibility and imagination. Not that these qualities shall really add anything to what the master has effected; but they must be put so entirely under his control, and work along with him to such an extent, that, in a different mood, when you are cold and critical, instead of sympathetic, you will be apt to fancy that the loftier merits of the picture were of your own dreaming, not of his creating. (294)]

The audience, then, must fully unloose its sympathy and its imagination if it is to derive full benefit from an art work. In each instance of observation, the artist's experience is harmoniously re-created in the capable observer. It is at this moment that the picture lives.

There is little evidence to indicate that Hawthorne ever developed a learned critical sense. He continued in his own way, liking that which appealed to him personally, and paying scant regard to the critical opinions of other men or of time itself. In whatever manner Hawthorne's art criticisms fail, they succeed in their very honesty. There was no feigned approval of that which failed to stir

him individually, even though he realized that a lack of approval might well be interpreted as a lack of taste. While the commentary on art plays but one tune, and it a rather simple one, it plays with the utmost sincerity.

### Poetry

Among the creators of the artistic, it is the poet who is most keenly in tune with a universal beauty. He, above all the rest of mankind, is capable of perceiving beauty and of giving form to his perception. It is he who delves beneath life's marble and mud to arrive at a stable and spiritual substance. Those men who are limited by their natures from seeing beyond the apparent, in no way negate the validity of the poet's vision.

Some, indeed, there were, who thought to show the soundness of their judgment by affirming that all the beauty and dignity of the natural world existed only in the poet's fancy. Let such men speak for themselves, who undoubtedly appear to have been spawned forth by nature with a contemptuous bitterness; she having plastered them up of her refuse stuff, after all the swine were made. As respects all things else, the poet's ideal was the truest truth.(295)

In life's hierarchy, the poet is placed by Hawthorne only a little below the angels.

Why are poets so apt to choose their mates, not for any similarity of poetic endowment, but for qualities which might make the happiness of the rudest handcraftsman as well as that of the ideal craftsman of the spirit? Because, probably, at his highest elevation, the poet needs no human intercourse; but he finds it dreary to descend, and be a stranger.(296)

In his function as a seer, a revealer of internal truths, a prophet, the poet is above contact with mere mortals. His heights are celestial ones, the task which he assumes the most noble open to mankind. Yet

each man is to some degree a poet; especially is this true of the imaginative but uninitiated youth.

Until twenty years of age, a young man may, indeed, be rather bashful about showing his poetry and his prose; but for all that, he is pretty apt to think that these very productions would place him at the tiptop of literature, if once they could be known.(297)

Great art cannot spring—any more than true virtue—from a cloistered state. It grows instead out of a mature acceptance of life—not from an acceptance which stops with passiveness, but out of one which pushes to the limits of human potential the search for those hidden beauties which lie just beneath man's fingertips and just beyond his vision.

"Our pale, thin, Yankee aspect is the fitter garniture for poets."(298) Hawthorne gives credence to the romantic notion of a starry-eyed poetic priesthood. Fat and robust people have no claim to poesy. The novelist has a genuine reverence for his romantically imagined, uniquely appearing poet. Poetry should take up the whole of a man's being. It is inconceivable that suave, sophisticated people could write decent verse as a hobby. Poetry is more than mere craft, more than the mechanical action of stringing words together; it is a spiritually consecrated way of life with a sanctified odor all its own. "A poet has a fragrance about him, such as no other human being is gifted withal; it is indestructible, and clings for evermore to everything he has touched."(299)

A truly accomplished poet reaches a form of immortality to which lesser artists may aspire, through the very grandeur of his work.

A poet's ghost is the only one that survives for his fellow-mortals, after his bones are in the dust,—and he not ghostly, but cherishing many hearts with his own warmth in the chillest

atmosphere of life. What other fame is worth aspiring for? Or, let me speak it more boldly, what other long-enduring fame can exist?(300)

Although Hawthorne makes few extravagant claims for the dabbler in prose, for the composer of fictions, he gives effusive praise to the melodious beauty of great poetic masterpieces. He holds the poet's ideal to be loftier than all others'.

"It is far easier to know and honor a poet when his fame has taken shape in the spotlessness of marble than when the actual man comes staggering before you, besmeared with the sordid stains of his daily life."(301) When the poet is seen in this life—where he is necessarily caught up in the tarnished actualities of the physical—his divinity is seldom apparent. Yet his eventual immortality, whether or not the earthly observer may recognize it, is assured. "It would be a poor compliment to a dead poet to fancy him leaning out of the sky and snuffing up the impure breath of earthly praise."(302) It is indeed a form of insult to bestow a perverted worldly praise on the poet, for his nature is essentially a divine one.

Hawthorne apparently supports all that the most optimistic theorizers on the function of the poet have had to say. Taken as a whole, his running commentary on the poetic art leaves much to be desired. He is too caught in the romantic myth of a poetic divinity, to speak without prejudice of the art. His idealizations are so extravagant that they tend to slip into sentimentality. Perhaps the fact that he himself could not write verse caused the novelist to pass the laurel to the poet.

Yet there is a healthy discriminatory power at work in Hawthorne's critical pronouncements. If he never failed to praise great poetry, he never forgot to ridicule the mediocre verse of his day. While his taste in poetry seems to have been a reasonably sound one, his excessive idealization of the poetic art defies logical explanation. Let it suffice to say that Hawthorne, for his own part, found more beauty in poetry than in any other of the art forms.

### Fiction

In a consideration of fiction as an art form, the now familiar critical pattern is again present. Hawthorne speaks of proper subjects, methods, and aims, but has little to say in a truly critical sense. Indeed, the novelist never claimed critical ability for himself, and he rarely commented in his letters and journals on the merit of literary productions arising during his lifetime. (If he was deeply moved by a work—as in his reading of Moby Dick—he might choose to congratulate its author. Hawthorne was not however, as were Poe and Margaret Fuller, a literary critic in the formal sense of the word.

Fiction—the one art at which he was truly accomplished—failed to stir a critical spirit in Hawthorne. It was one of his precepts that each man is his own best critic, and if he, Hawthorne, failed to appreciate a work he frequently chose to remain silent. Although fiction had come to be respected in England by 1800, it was first put on its feet in America by Irving, Cooper, and, more especially, by Hawthorne himself. Fiction, by comparison with other art forms, was still in a state of infancy; it was not to be accepted on the same

level with poetry.

Yet the problems and the duties of the novelist are essentially those of the poet. "Poor author! How will he despise what he can grasp, for the sake of the dim glory that eludes him!"(303) The writer eternally sacrifices himself to his aim; strives to capture that which stays always one moment ahead of him. "When we see how little we can express, it is a wonder that any man ever takes up a pen a second time."(304) Although strangers in their mediums, all artists are brothers in their purpose and in their problems. They are equally humbled by the fact that what they feel is so much more than what they can express.

"Bees are sometimes drowned in the honey which they collect-- so some writers lost in their collected learning."(305) In picking up the "bee" symbol made familiar by Swift's The Battle of the Books, Hawthorne places himself with those who spin from an inner fiber. Since his genius was an original one, he must have looked with disfavor on those writers who smother the fire of their own mind by becoming parasites to other men's learning. If a writer will but develop his own ideas to the best of his capabilities, then may he judge his own work from the subjective certainty of an organic insight rather than from externally applied criteria. "Manuscript is as delusive as moonshine. Print is like common daylight, and enables an author to comprehend himself as no dictum of another man ever will."(306) Each writer, if he be keen enough to turn out worthwhile manuscript, is fully qualified to evaluate his own work.

Hawthorne never wrote his serious pieces with general popularity as a goal. An author must write for those who will understand him, not for the great multitude. All else is but hack work. "The truth seems to be, however, that, when he casts his leaves forth upon the wind, the author addresses, not the many who will fling aside his volume, or never take it up, but the few who will understand him, better than most of his schoolmates or lifemates."(307)

A preternatural realm just beyond the phenomenal one is suited to romance writing.

Moonlight, in a familiar room, falling so white upon the carpet, and showing all its figures so distinctly,—making every object so minutely visible, yet so unlike a morning or noon tide visibility,—is a medium the most suitable for a romance-writer to get acquainted with his elusive guests.(308)

This is not to say that the romantic realm is by any token of the imagination an unreal one, for it is here that truth operates in a select and condensed medium. Here, objects and facts are not allowed to get in the way of "reality." Here, one may give artistically satisfying form to what is known or suspected about life.

Truth, once discovered and expressed, remains absolute and fixed. "A high truth, indeed, fairly, finely, and skilfully wrought out, brightening at every step, and crowning the final development of a work of fiction, may add an artistic glory, but is never any truer, and seldom any more evident, at the last page than at the first."(309) Once a truth is arrived at there is no need for additional elaboration—the truth about sin, for instance, remains unchanged from first to last; but the aims of art—beauty and "reality"—lead the mind ever onward.

Since truths remain eternally the same, a vigorous and imaginative youth may prophetically voice the knowledge which age comes to know more fully.

In youth, men are apt to write more wisely than they really know or feel; and the remainder of life may be not idly spent in realizing and convincing themselves of the wisdom which they uttered long ago. The truth that was only in the fancy then may have since become a substance in the mind and heart.(310)

Romance was of special concern. ("Romance and poetry, ivy, lichens, and wall-flowers, need ruin to make them grow."(311)) The past, with its accompanying decay, is necessary to cast a spell over the materials of life. A romance should not be set in a present time amid new and untested surroundings. It is necessary for the novelist to move into the past in order to gain that detachment which gives perspective. Although Hawthorne offers little formal criticism of fiction as an art form, he is not silent concerning his personal relationship with it.

#### Hawthorne and Fiction

Even though the novelist left no full record of his literary aims and methods, he frequently broke through his native reticence in letters to intimate friends. On other occasions, he sprinkled the prefaces to his books with bits of critical opinion. In his preface to The House of the Seven Gables, for example, the novelist states his conception of romance writing. Because Hawthorne had labored so long and bitterly for success in writing, his sometimes sensitive reaction to outside criticism was partially justified. "If I doubt the sincerity and correctness of any of my critics, it shall be of those who censure

me."(312) He continued to feel throughout his lifetime that an artist was his own most competent critic.

In his own novels and tales, he was sorely pressed by the difficulty of maintaining a balance between the realm of everyday life and that more concentrated and shadowy realm in which he had chosen to work. When that balance fails, as it sometimes does, the story suffers immeasurably.

Sometimes, when tired of it, it strikes me that the whole is an absurdity from beginning to end; but the fact is, in writing a romance, a man is always, or always ought to be, careering on the utmost verge of precipitous absurdity, and the skill lies in coming as close as possible, without actually tumbling over.(313)

For this and other reasons, writing never ceased to be hard work for Hawthorne. At times the compositional chore became almost too difficult. "The fact is, I have a natural abhorrence of pen and ink, and nothing short of absolute necessity drives me to them."(314)

That "abhorrence of pen and ink," referred to so unhesitatingly, was probably a feigned one. The sense of having created something beautiful and significant was undoubtedly satisfying to Hawthorne. A writer does not give a twelve-year apprenticeship to a profession which he detests. In unguarded moments, Hawthorne was willing to admit that the bitter toil of writing was not without its sweetness. "The only sensible ends of literature are, first, the pleasurable toil of writing; second, the gratification of one's family and friends; and, lastly, the solid cash."(315) The sense of achievement and satisfaction accompanying the writing of the novels and tales, along with a love for Sophia and the children, very probably constituted Hawthorne's greatest pleasures.

Although Hawthorne was not in the least ashamed of the money his writings earned, he remained true to his artistic creed whenever it conflicted with cash. Friendships were not to be bartered in print. In the controversy with his publishers over the prefatory remarks to Our Old Home, the writer flatly refused to delete his dedication to the no longer popular, as far as the American people were concerned, Franklin Pierce.

I cannot, merely on account of pecuniary profit or literary reputation, go back from what I have deliberately felt and thought it right to do; and if I were to tear out the dedication I should never look at the volume again without remorse and shame. As for the literary public, it must accept my book precisely as I think fit to give it, or let it alone.<sup>65</sup>

If the book did not sell because of the dedication, then well enough, but the dedication was a deserved one. It stayed.

"When once a man is thoroughly imbued with ink, he can never wash out the stain." (316) Hawthorne readily admits his fate, his peculiar destiny to go on writing so long as he is physically and mentally able. Yet he never claimed great merit for his publications, for he was too keen and detached a critic of his writings, too aware of his own limitations and of the conditions under which he could create, to grow rhapsodic over his successes.<sup>66</sup> In a letter to Fields written in 1854, Hawthorne pokes fun at himself. "Upon my honor, I am not quite sure that I comprehend my own meaning, in some of these blasted allegories; but I remember that I always had a meaning, or at

<sup>65</sup> Fields, Yesterday with Authors, p. 108.

<sup>66</sup> Austin Warren, "Hawthorne's Reading," New England Quarterly, VIII (December 1935), 480.

least thought I had."<sup>67</sup> The truth is that a Hawthornian allegory begins and ends in a preternatural realm, and that it is permanently fixed in a state of suggestibility. There is no need for a complete and cold meaning.

The aversion to public women who "display their natal minds" is more understandable when related to Hawthorne's own reserve.

So far as I am a man of really individual attributes I veil my face; nor am I, nor have I ever been, one of those supremely hospitable people who serve up their own hearts, delicately fried, with brain sauce, as a tidbit for their beloved public.(317)

Even though the author does not reveal himself in a sentimental way, or write of his life in the manner of a Byron, this much is certain: he does make his personal thought the fabric of all that he writes, and, in addition to the subtle ways in which he cloaks his thought in fiction, he frequently reveals his mental and emotional being in a series of personal observations and affirmations.

It has been noted that Hawthorne did not strive for popularity--that he was little concerned with it, and that he was frequently unimpressed by those who had achieved it. "My own opinion is, that I am not really a popular writer, and that what popularity I have gained is chiefly accidental, and owing to other causes than my own kind of degree of merit."(318) He knew well enough that his own works were too somber to ever be popular; that they tended to voice truths which mankind was not fond of hearing. "If I were to meet with such books as mine, by another writer, I don't believe I should be able to

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<sup>67</sup>Fields, Yesterday with Authors, p. 75.

get through them."(319)

Hawthorne wrote from compulsion, but read for relaxation. He preferred, for his own pleasure, to pick up the wholesome novels of a Scott or a Trollope. It is not strange that one who wrote so heavily should enjoy comparatively lighter reading in his free moments. When writing to Fields from England, as late as 1860, Hawthorne still cherished the delusion that he might someday strike a cheerful note. "When I get home, I will try to write a more genial book; but the Devil himself always seems to get into my inkstand, and I can only exorcise him by pensful at a time."<sup>68</sup> The plain truth of the matter is that Hawthorne could write only what he knew. If he recognized sin as an actuality, then he could not write about it as if it did not exist. The locale of the story itself, or the place of composition made no appreciable difference; for, be it Salem, London, or Rome, life was everywhere the same. Problems that Hawthorne had begun to toy with in his earliest stories, he continued to turn grimly over and over in his later writings. His cry was that "I wish God had given me the faculty of writing a sunshiny book."(320) It was a cry predestined to remain unanswered. If he sometimes wished that he could write otherwise than he did, he was quite convinced that this was not to be.<sup>69</sup>

True pathos is found in the novelist's recognition that the

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>69</sup> Bertha Faust, Hawthorne's Contemporaneous Reputation (Philadelphia, 1939), p. 145.

ability to write had at long last deserted him. "Yet it is not quite pleasant for an author to announce himself, or to be announced, as finally broken down as to his literary faculty."(321) In the last year of his life, 1864, Hawthorne vainly labored over The Dolliver Romance, but he seems to have suspected months before his death that he would never live to complete it.

"Subtlety, truth and beauty are noble aims which Hawthorne shared with other writers of fiction; but in aspiring to make an art more beautiful than nature, an art which suggested another realm of values, Hawthorne stood almost alone in his time."<sup>70</sup> It is indeed true that Hawthorne in his relationship to art struggled toward almost unattainable goals. It is true that he quietly accepted the task for himself which he had assigned to the poet. It is also happily true that he went further than most artists in realizing those seemingly unreachable objectives.

In addition to the commentary on the enumerated media of art and to the personal unfolding of the author's relationship to his own medium, Hawthorne reflected with no little acuteness on subjects tangential to the arts--taste, talent, genius, methods, media, and aims. At times he praises, at other times he finds fault, but he always remains true to that spiritual standard which first began to reveal itself in his preference for Gothic architecture.

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<sup>70</sup>Charles H. Foster, "Hawthorne's Literary Theory," PMLA, LVII (March 1942), 243.

Taste

Just as society was attacked for its superficiality, even so is taste condemned for the same failing. Taste is cultivated, lettered, man-created. Anyone can acquire taste—provided he exert the proper amount of effort—in much the same way that one learns table manners, yet the acquisition seems hardly worthwhile to one with Hawthorne's unpretentious approach to life. Hawthorne was a simple person in many ways—at heart a family man; he was scarcely a connoisseur. If he did not like something—opera, for instance—he resented the implication that he was deficient in good taste.

"Doubtless, I shall be able to pass for a man of taste, by the time I return to America. It is an acquired taste, like that for wines; and I question whether a man is really any truer, wiser, or better, for possessing it."(322) The sheer labor involved in cultivating one's taste, causes Hawthorne to question whether or not the end result is worth the effort. If the acquisition is difficult, it is somewhat rewarding in that it opens the way to a perception of highly refined beauties. "Mounting a few steps higher, one sees beauties. But how much study, how many opportunities, are requisite, to form and cultivate a taste!"(323)

After some deliberation, the moralist comes to the conclusion that taste is not necessarily related to morality. "Taste seems to be a department of moral sense; and yet it is so little identical with it, and so little implies conscience, that some of the worst men in the world have been the most refined."(324) The artificial or

intellectual tone of taste sufficiently explains the apparent amorality.

A genuine love of painting and sculpture, and perhaps of music, seems often to have distinguished men capable of every social crime, and to have formed a fine and hard enamel over their characters. Perhaps it is because such tastes are artificial, the product of cultivation, and, when highly developed, imply a great remove from natural simplicity.(325)

Thus it is, as with the social order, that the further man removes himself from the simple whispering of his heart, the more corrupt his contrivances.

There is a distinct possibility that Hawthorne felt himself lacking in what was commonly thought of as "good taste." Perhaps he first became cognizant of this shortcoming during his years in England and Italy. Thus, a Hawthorne deficient in refined or cultivated taste might choose to dismiss both the social order and the standards of taste as highly artificial, man-made contrivances. It is very probable, however, that this was not the case. Hawthorne was his own best critic; he knew his shortcomings and was the first to admit them. It would be decidedly unlike him to deceive his reading public or himself on any score. If Hawthorne's evaluation of taste and society is to be interpreted as the outgrowth of a feeling of social inferiority, then it assuredly worked itself out on a subconscious level.

The diatribe on taste is better understood in its relationship to the total Hawthornian thought world. Taste, as the novelist saw it, was a superficial, learned accomplishment possible to all men. It was not moral; neither was it intuitive. It operated, instead, under man's law of the head. It had none of the matter of the heart about it; it had no spiritual value.

Talent and Genius

When dealing with the various arts, Hawthorne lamented the scarcity of genius and the superfluity of talent present in this world. The great danger is that the inept, the mediocre, and the competent are apt to think that they have talent, and that each talented person is prone to believe himself a genius. A man never really knows his own measurement, for although he may have the good sense to realize that he has some talent, he never knows its quantity or its quality.

But, after all, a man gifted with thought and expression whatever his rank in life, and his mode of uttering himself, whether by pen or tongue, cannot be expected to go through the world, without finding himself out—and as all such self-discoveries are partial and imperfect, they do more harm than good to the character.(326)

Since the individual's self-discovery is so pitifully incomplete, the arts are plagued with unfortunate creatures who would waste others' time and their own lives in an attempt to further that which does not exist in the first place.

"Perhaps, moreover, he whose genius appears deepest and truest excels his fellows in nothing save the knack of expression; he throws out occasionally a lucky hint at truths of which every human soul is profoundly, though unutterably, conscious."(327) It would appear in this instance that Hawthorne is giving too much credit either to human nature or to man's intelligence. In truth, though, he is only remarking that genius must have a recipient—that it cannot operate in a vacuum—that to function as genius it must somehow communicate. Hawthorne himself felt that the truths which he perceived and artistically expressed were common to all mankind rather than

individual in their nature. A truth is not a fact to be learned as much as it is the revelation of that which the perceiver previously knew but was incapable of expressing. Hence, genius in its primary form may be thought of as the knack of giving form in some worthwhile medium to universal knowledge.

Hawthorne's appraisal of genius repeats, for the most part, the same refrain which he played over and over when criticizing painting. "There is very little talent in this world, and what there is, it seems to me, is pretty well known and acknowledged. We don't often stumble upon geniuses in obscure corners."(328) "Westminster Abbey makes me feel—not how many great, wise, witty, and bright men there are—but how very few in any age, and how small a harvest of them for all the ages."(329) What little genius may be truly said to exist in this world is, in a final analysis, ephemeral. Much of the great genius of past ages has been lost in transit. That which should by rights endure forever as the heritage of civilized man is eventually swallowed up by time.

Genius, indeed, melts many ages into one, and thus effects something permanent, yet still with a similarity of office to that of the more ephemeral writer. A work of genius is but the newspaper of a century, or perchance of a hundred centuries.(330)

Only God is beyond time. The greatest of man's accomplishments in art are eventually lost into time; the great immortal names, even the poet's sacred name, are no longer sounded.

#### The Audience

Art has no existence apart from its audience. A painting, a

poem, a novel achieves no finality in its printed form, nor is it limited by the intentions of the artist who created it. Art comes alive only when it is perceived, and reaches its potential to varying degrees in the mind and heart of its perceiver.

"It seems to me that a work of art is entitled to credit for all that it makes us feel in our best moments; and we must judge of its merits by the impression it then makes, and not by the coldness and insensibility of our less genial moods." (331) The best that one may discover at his highest moments is potential in and belongs to the piece of art under consideration. It is not so much, then, what the artist has consciously put into his creation that limits its possibilities, but rather what the audience is able to find therein. This is not to imply that inferior work has a claim to genius. All excellence which is to be found in art comes originally from the artist himself, but the limit of what is to be found is fixed by the audience. A rich piece of art thrown open to a highly imaginative audience is almost infinite in its potential.

Since art work is dependent on audience response, the richer the artist's creation, the greater the variety of that response.

There is no doubt that the public is, to a certain extent, right and sure of its ground, when it declares, through a series of ages, that a certain picture is a great work. It is so; a great symbol, proceeding out of a great mind; but if it means one thing, it seems to mean a thousand, and, often, opposite things. (332)

Because of its very depths, great art is relative. It contains a variety of messages for each and all mankind. If the truth and beauty embedded in a masterpiece be absolute—that is, in existence for all

mankind—the manner and the degree to which these qualities register on the interpreter is a relative one.

Although audiences are hard pressed to find beauty in the smaller art objects, size has nothing to do with the excellence of a given piece of art.

Greater [larger] things can be reasonably well appreciated with a less scrupulous though broader attention; but in order to estimate the brilliancy of the diamond eyes of a little agate bust, for instance, you have to screw your mind down to them and nothing else. You must sharpen your faculties of observation to a point, and touch the object exactly on the right spot, or you do not appreciate it at all.(333)

If the observer does not succeed in sharpening his mind down to the minutiae, he is apt to miss completely all that is present in the work. It is difficult to appreciate the beauties of a single piece of sculpture when it is placed along side the massive outlines of a cathedral. Yet the beauty and the truth to be found in the sculpture, if properly understood, might well surpass the awesome grandeur of the surrounding structure.

Art audiences are frequently as fickle as first loves.

The "Gentle Reader," in the case of any individual author, is apt to be extremely short-lived; he seldom outlasts a literary fashion, and, except in very rare instances, closes his weary eyes before the writer has half done with him. If I find him at all, it will probably be under some mossy-gravestone, inscribed with a half obliterated name which I shall never recognize.(334)

There was no awareness on Hawthorne's part that his own artistic productions might command readers in future ages. Neither did he seem to realize the timeless quality of the truths which he phrased. Perhaps the knowledge that audiences demand a certain catering from their novelist, and that "thought grows mouldy from one generation to

the next" dampened his enthusiasm for literary immortality.

{ "Like all revelations of the better life, the adequate perception of a great work of art demands a gifted simplicity of vision."(335)) Mediums of art revelation are elemental ones. Art moves from its canvas, stone, or printed page into its audience primarily through the heart. The process is both simple and unaffected, for art reveals itself in the manner of religion and love. No amount of audience intellectuality will hurry its course. Intelligence, while it determines the range of one's comprehension, affects but little the quality of it. Thus it is that an unlettered soul might find as much or more in a given masterpiece as the most widely publicized art critic; even though he could not express in words what had been felt and seen, the perception of the unlearned observer is equally valid.

Art's audience is not to be lightly dismissed. Whereas the artist need not cater to the low taste of the general public, he must recognize that his art has existence only in the minds and hearts of its perceivers. In striving to ferret out and formulate that which lies beneath the dross, the artist elects for himself the noblest profession--that of bringing truth and beauty to his fellow man. An artist who contents himself with the art creation alone, rather than with the bonded duty of communication, desecrates his entire brotherhood.

#### Fame

Hawthorne's ideas on fame may have been partially determined by his own lack of literary success before 1850. Prior to then, during

the time when he felt himself to be the most unknown man of letters in America, fame was looked upon contemptuously. "The surest fame is that which comes after a man's death."(336) In truth, fame was but incidental to a Hawthorne pledged to and guided by his own set of ideal standards. "As for fame, it is but little matter whether we acquire it or not."(337) If Hawthorne ever nurtured a desire to become famous in the eyes of the populace, he never let it be known. Like any author he wanted people to read his books, wanted those books to sell, but fame itself was looked upon as the most superficial of literary goals.

After fame found its way to the novelist in 1850, he began to pay more attention to it, but never actually changed his opinion of its hollowness. "A man—poet, prophet, or whatever he may be—readily persuades himself of his right to all the worship that is voluntarily tendered."(338) Whatever fame incidentally comes, the artist may willingly accept, but at the same time he should realize that the acquisition of fame is not in his power, and that whether or not popularity ever comes is of little consequence.

What nonsense it is, this care of ours for good fame or bad fame after death! If it were of the slightest real moment, our reputations would have been placed by Providence more in our own power, and less in other people's than they now are.(339)

No matter how man may court fame, she may deny her hand; yet if he turn his back on her, she is apt to seek him out.

To Horatio Bridge, Hawthorne disparages the popular acclaim which he had begun to receive by 1851.

The bubble reputation is as much a bubble in literature as it is in war, and I should not be one whit the happier if mine were world-wide and long-time than I was when nobody but yourself had

faith in me.<sup>71</sup>

Still, the recognition given to an author bolsters his tired spirits. As age increases, as the range of pleasure is narrowed, words of commendation begin to carry a greater warmth. "You cannot imagine how a little praise jollifies us poor authors to the marrow of our bones."<sup>72</sup>

Longfellow the poet, a Bowdoin classmate, had long enjoyed his allotment of fame. Hawthorne, in the year of his death, poses the issue of fame to the companion of his college days. "You can tell, far better than I, whether there is anything worth having in literary reputation; and whether the best achievements seem to have any substance after they grow cold."<sup>72</sup> There is nothing durable about fame, no solidity beneath its glitter. Of all the flickering shadows of man's phenomenal world, fame is felt to be the most elusive, and, were it somehow to be grasped, by far the most unsatisfactory.

#### The Artist's Ideal

Artists are not confined within the sordid compass of daily life, but follow an ethereal spark which must eventually lead them upward to the beautiful. Strangely enough, the artist hovers both within and without the circle of humanity. As one of the members of that circle he lifts from humanity those elements which are most abiding and most beautiful, shapes them in a semi-divine stream of

<sup>71</sup>Bridge, Recollections, p. 175.

<sup>72</sup>Samuel Longfellow, Life of N. W. Longfellow, III, 29.

thought, and returns them to mankind in the form of art. As one who dwells outside and above the circle, he administers to humanity from his divine priesthood.

But what, more specifically, is the ideal of art? "When the artist rose high enough to achieve the beautiful, the symbol by which he made it perceptible to mortal senses became of little value in his eyes while his spirit possessed itself in the enjoyment of the reality." (311) If the perception of beauty is a "reality," if it is the supreme destiny of art to fashion beauty, then beauty is undeniably spiritual. Hawthorne's universe is thickly peopled with spiritual essences which often pass under different labels. "Reality," for instance, is known as a spiritual substance embedded in deceptively concrete exteriors. When reflecting on beauty, Hawthorne thinks again of a spiritual stream flowing behind the apparent one. The actual, the spiritual, the beautiful are inextricably confused, for they are, in fact, identical in their fiber. It is only in context that they come to have different significations—different shades and tones. Clustered abstractions, though admittedly ill-defined, are central to all that Hawthorne thought and felt. "Like Sophocles, Hawthorne aimed at an idealization which was not a beautiful realm of escape from actuality but was actuality shaped so that it was universal truth."<sup>73</sup>

Should an artist accept the challenge of his ideal, he will soon find himself in continual conflict with the rude practicalities of daily existence.

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<sup>73</sup>Charles H. Foster, "Hawthorne's Literary Theory," PMLA, LVII, 244.

Thus it is that ideas, which grow up within the imagination and appear so lovely to it and of a value beyond whatever men call valuable, are exposed to be shattered and annihilated by contact with the practical. It is requisite for the ideal artist to possess a force of character that seems hardly compatible with its delicacy; he must keep his faith in himself while the incredulous world assails him with its utter disbelief; he must stand up against mankind and be his sole disciple, both as respects his genius and the objects to which it is directed.(342)

The necessity of holding faith in the face of worldly rebuff is a grueling one. Adherence to the ideal, however, gives a satisfaction more divinely permanent than any the outer world can offer. Consequently, the artist pursues his ideal; he moves beyond the depiction of surface phenomena and into the complex realm of great art.

"The beautiful idea has no relation to size, and may be as perfectly developed in a space too minute for any but microscopic investigations as with the ample verge that is measured by the arc of the rainbow."(343) That beauty which is shaped from the complex tickings of human life itself surpasses all other artistic achievements. "It is not well to be so perfect in the inanimate, unless the artist can likewise make man and woman as lifelike--and to as great a depth too--as the Creator does."(344) Yet even the inanimate, if properly dedicated, remains permanently beautiful in its decadence.

But a castle does not make nearly so interesting and impressive a ruin as an abbey; because the latter was built for beauty, and on a plan in which deep thought and feeling were involved; and having once been a grand and beautiful work, it continues grand and beautiful through all the successive stages of its decay.(345)

Beauty is eulogized so frequently by Hawthorne, is played with so untiringly in his tales, that were it not for the knowledge of that

total orientation to life, of which beauty is but a shining component, the novelist might well be misunderstood as being far more of a disciple to beauty than he actually was.

Certain English critics of the 18th Century had eagerly accepted "nature" as a law giver. Hawthorne, with his Gothic temperament, found the dictums of the Neo-Classicalists to be rather cold and stilted. When speaking of nature, he uses the term in a romantic application. Nature, and that which is congruent to nature, is unaffected, unartificial, and uncodified. Nature is both a physical presence and a primal spirit. "But I do not think I can be driven out of the idea that a picture ought to have something in common with what the spectator sees in Nature."(346) The methodized nature of the neo-classical poets is of little concern.

Artists, since they breathe a nobler air, are entitled to weave their art work from those rarified insights which become their special prerogative.

(Artists, indeed, are lifted by the ideality of their pursuits a little way off the earth, and are therefore able to catch the evanescent fragrance that floats in the atmosphere of life above the heads of the ordinary crowd. Even if they seem endowed with little imagination individually, yet there is a property, a gift, a talisman, common to their class, entitling them to partake somewhat more bountifully than other people in the thin delights of moonshine and romance.(347))

If an artist may not find sympathy and friendship among men of identical ideals, where then may he look. ("If anywise interested in art, a man must be difficult to please who cannot find fit companionship among a crowd of persons, whose ideas and pursuits all tend towards the general purpose of enlarging the world's stock of

beautiful productions." (348)

Although Hawthorne did not choose his warmest friends from among the art fold—men like Bridge and Pierce were more to his liking—still he took delight in defending the sanctity of an artistic brotherhood. In 1849, just after the novelist had been unjustly accused of writing political articles for The Salem Advertiser, he had written in spirited letter to Longfellow:

If they succeed in getting me out of office, I will surely immolate some of them. . . . This I will do, not as an act of individual vengeance, but in your behalf as well as mine, because they will have violated the sanctity of the priesthood to which we both, in different degrees, belong.<sup>74</sup>

The pursuit of the artist's ideal is never an empty one. No matter how far short of his goal a man may fall, it is better to have made the effort. In rising far above the animal state of existence, in rising slightly above that of the human state, the artist derives far more from living, however brief and seemingly futile his life may be, than the average citizen.

(This sunny, shadowy, breezy, wandering life, in which he seeks for beauty as his treasure, and gathers for his winter's honey what is but a passing fragrance to all other men, is worth living for, come afterwards what may. Even if he die unrecognized, the artist has had his share of enjoyment and success.)<sup>75</sup>

Ideals were actualities to Hawthorne. "Indeed, it is evident on almost every page of his works that not simply beauty, but a beauty that was truth was the goal of his art."<sup>75</sup> It is the ultimate aim of art to give truth and to be beautiful. In order to accomplish this aim

<sup>74</sup>Samuel Longfellow, Life of H. W. Longfellow, II, 152.

<sup>75</sup>Charles H. Foster, "Hawthorne's Literary Theory," PMLA, LVII, 246.

to any degree, the artist must deal with that which is spiritual. When he lifts himself to work on the higher planes, the artist may experience more in a moment than most men in a lifetime; for it is in loosing himself into spiritual substances that a man finds himself. The vision or knowledge of an inner actuality, coupled with the substantial ability to formulate this knowledge into a beautiful and meaningful art, encompasses the ultimate of human potential.

#### Methods and Problems of Art

When an ideal is seen in terms of the utilitarian considerations necessary for its application to phenomenal life, it grows infinitely more complex. What then are the problems which the working artist must face, and what are the methods and media through which he may surmount those difficulties? In carrying out his ethereal ideas an artist is forced to work with worldly materials. That effort required to polish a scarred subject matter to an unblemished gloss is tediously painstaking.

Fancy serves the artist as an indispensable instrument of his trade.

A license must be assumed in brightening the materials which time has rusted, and in tracing out half-obliterated inscriptions on the columns of antiquity: Fancy must throw her reviving light on the faded incidents that indicate character, whence a ray will be reflected, more or less vividly, on the person to be described.(350)

The writer is fully justified in conjuring up the past and presenting it well filtered through the imagination and the fancy. Art is not to stop with mere facts, nor is it to be hindered by a lack of them. It

owes its allegiance only to the higher truths. Whatever procedures the artist may employ to reach those truths are justifiable in the light of the end result.

"An innate perception and reflection of truth gives the only sort of originality that does not finally grow intolerable."(351) Genuine originality, on which art thrives, has its roots in man's heart. It is intuitive rather than learned; like religion and love, it is unaffected. It is limited only in that man, a limited creature, is forced to express in words that which often lies beyond words.

"Language—human language—after all, is but little better than the croak and cackle of fowls, and other utterances of brute nature; sometimes not so adequate."(352) The artist is bounded, then, by the potential of the tools with which he works—marble, oil, words—and is, therefore, not always able to perfect the deepest and the most beautiful of his thoughts. There is no true finality, as far as the artist is concerned, for his aspirations are prone to roam ahead of his practical ability.

Perhaps the major problem which all artists face is the nature of the life compound itself. The artist's chore, that of seeking out a marble so thoroughly encased in mud, appears, at first glance, an impossible one. Minute strands of dross cling to the noblest creations of man. "It is a heavy annoyance to a writer, who endeavors to represent nature, its various attitudes and circumstances, in a reasonably correct outline and true coloring, that so much of the mean and ludicrous should be hopelessly mixed up with the purest pathos

which life anywhere supplies to him."(353) Since the compound is so pervasive, and since the ordinary facts of daily relationship may nowise escape it, the artist is forced to select and idealize certain elements in order to crystallize that which is best in life. Earthly facts are but the outer breath of "reality"; they remain meaningless until secured in a deeper relationship. "There is no harm, but, on the contrary, good, in arraying some of the ordinary facts of life in a slightly idealized and artistic guise."(354) The artist does not violate the integrity of the life compound by idealizing selected ingredients of it; nor does he alter the nature of that unchangeable compound in offering up through an artistic medium that which is most beneficial to man's spiritual welfare. Romance, as Hawthorne knew it and wrote it, stems from a higher truth rather than from pure fancy.

"Impressions, states of mind, produced by noble spectacles of whatever kind, are all that it seems worth while to attempt reproducing with the pen."(355) Just as Hawthorne appeared to be something of a relativist in his commentary upon art's audience, he appears as an impressionist when discussing the methods of art. A mere recording of daily events—surface description—has no value. The novelist had warned his intimate friend, Horatio Bridge, that he should not let himself be limited by what appears as factual.

I would advise you not to stick too accurately to the bare fact, either in your descriptions or your narrative; else your hand will be cramped, and the result will be a want of freedom that will deprive you of a higher truth than that which you strive to obtain.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Bridge, Recollections, p. 92.

In one sense of the word Hawthorne is an impressionist; yet he seems to have identified impressions with intuitions.

Correct outlines avail little or nothing, though truth of coloring may be somewhat more efficacious. Impressions, however, states of mind produced by interesting and remarkable objects, these, if truthfully and vividly recorded, may work a genuine effect, and, though but the result of what we see, go further towards representing the actual scene than any direct effort to paint it.(356)

It is the abstraction, the intangible, which has substance for Hawthorne. Visible objects are but shadows. Although Hawthorne recommends a form of impressionism, he would tend to define the impression as an intuition of truth and "reality."

One means of acquiring a freedom to create comes in removing the chosen subject from the confusion of the contemporary scene.

In truth, the artist (unless there be a divine efficacy in his touch, making evident a heretofore hidden dignity in the actual form) feels it an imperious law to remove his subject as far from the aspect of ordinary life as may be possible without sacrificing every trace of resemblance.(357)

The subject is first perceived in, and then extracted from, the materials of ordinary life. Second, it is moved through the imagination where it is placed in its proper perspective with certain known "realities." Finally, it is artistically reassembled, without once having violated its integrity, in a new and finer unit. This is the method which Hawthorne recommends; and although it is romantic in its process, it is ultimately related to actual life.

Certain conclusions may be drawn from Hawthorne's rather elaborate commentary on art. First of all, a complete fidelity to the spiritual nature of the universe is mandatory. Second, the aim of all

art is the creation and communication of beauty and truth. Third, the size of an art piece has nothing to do with the quality of the art therein contained. Fourth, a preference for the Gothic manifests an interest in that which is lifelike, rugged, and suggestive rather than that which attempts perfection and finality in smoother lines. Fifth, art springs from the heart; it is intuitive in its origin. Sixth, and finally, art, along with love and religion, affords man his finest opportunity for expressing the best which is latent in his nature.

Art has its function in Hawthorne's universe, but it does not supersede his conception of life's darker essences. To neglect the perspective in which art was seen by Hawthorne is to distort the Hawthornian philosophy. Hawthorne was an artist, yes, but he was many other men at the same time. Art--though it played a leading role in the novelist's life--is viewed, in a last analysis, as a partial but affirmative retreat, along with religion and love, from the rock-ribbed, eternal thundering of the sin-cloud.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HUMAN NATURE

Since people are curiosities, Hawthorne made a profession of observing them. "No individuals were sufficiently humble to merit his indifference or sufficiently commonplace to escape his analysis."<sup>77</sup> Although what he saw in human nature is interesting enough, what he could not comprehend--that which he never wrote about--is equally absorbing in its absence. Human nature is shaped at first within the shadow of the unknowable life conditions preceding birth, and then by the lights and shadows of institutionalized forces at play upon the emerging individual. It is, in fact, a product of unchangeable contingencies rather than a distinct, self-sustaining entity. Mankind's nature is moulded by all that it is forced to participate in; it does not fashion its own destiny. Finally, the apparent variety of human nature is exceeded only by its monotony.

Reactions to the fixed conditions of life--individual actions, thoughts, feelings--provide an unfolding panorama which the observer of destiny's workshop assumed it his charge to record. When recording group or individual responses to conditions or to other individuals, he saw as uppermost the infinitely varied aspect of human nature. When reflecting on and interpreting these same responses from a distance, he

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<sup>77</sup>Newton Arvin, ed., The Heart of Hawthorne's Journals (Boston, 1929), p. xl.

reduced human nature to its predominant characteristic—sameness. The story of human nature, if held up to the light in its simplest form, presents its reader with what is perhaps the darkest one novel that Hawthorne wrote. Yet human nature, however separate it may appear at first glance, is inextricably mixed with and derived from the dark pattern of prenatal "realities," from the domestic-religious partial release from that pattern, and from the crushing necessity for social participation.

Human nature is limited in that man is a sinful creature. Hawthorne's inquiry into human nature rests upon the assumption that mankind always has been and always will be in a state of depravity. — In brief, his inquiry would determine the degree of that depravity. Hawthorne would not, like Jonathan Swift, condemn man for a lack of reason; he would instead chastise man for a misdirected reliance on the intellect. If human nature is ever to improve—and the novelist saw little indication that improvement was forthcoming—it must cease to depend on mere intellect. Mankind's nature is selfish, animal, short-sighted, and vain, yet it has within it a spark which may and frequently does cause it to momentarily rise above its characteristic failings.

Although the human potential is thoroughly bounded by the immense forces under which it must subsist, it is at the same time limited in much more subtle ways. Physical life's complex imperfection imposes barriers at the end of every pathway. In dealing with life, and in dealing with fellow human beings, the individual is at constant

odds with these barriers.

#### Limitations on Mankind

Life permits no erasures. Humanity is unduly restricted in that each of its mistaken actions carries with it a harsh finality.

It is a truth (and it would be a very sad one but for the higher hopes which it suggests) that no great mistake, whether acted or endured, in our mortal sphere, is ever really set right. Time, the continual vicissitude of circumstances, and the invariable inopportunity of death, render it impossible. If, after long lapse of years, the right seems to be in our power, we find no niche to set it in. The better remedy is for the sufferer to pass on, and leave what he once thought his irreparable ruin far behind him.(358)

Once an action has taken place, man is sentenced to live forever with its consequences. Human nature is fatally limited in that it cannot, like God, create new life. Man is forced to live, and invariably, during the course of his lifetime, forced to err. Since man is forced to move imperfectly, and since he has no means of avoiding the ordained errancies of his physical self, he is eternally doomed to limp along his barrier-encrusted pathway. At each crossroad, once the wrong path is chosen, there is no backtracking. Hawthorne does not speak optimistically of a good life; for, while there are possible degrees of goodness, there is scant possibility of a wholly good and pure existence.

"How different is the spontaneous play of the intellect from the trained diligence of maturer years, when toil has perhaps grown easy by long habit, and the day's work may have become essential to the day's comfort, although the rest of the matter has bubbled away!"(359)

Mankind's period of full activity is unbelievably brief. In youth, as a neophyte, it cannot be truly said that he has begun to live with the actualities of life. In his later period he is forced to adjust to a routine which no longer has substance. It is only in the middle years that the total energies for life are unloosed. But here, in the period of full activity, that which is original and spontaneous in the species is rapidly squeezed by greater than human forces into the mere nothingness of an empty pattern. Here, too, the mightiest efforts of man prove ineffectual, for an inscrutable providence moves with a swifter and a surer hand. "And perhaps the forms and appliances of human life are never fit to make people happy, until they cease to be used for the purposes for which they were directly intended, and are taken, as it were, in a sidelong application."(360)

In addition to the physical and mental consequences—whether for good or for evil—present in the most seemingly trivial of man's actions, there is a greater law of compensation at work. The principle of a balanced universe—although the compound is deeply gray, rather than an equal blending of the dark and the light—may not be violated. Any effort, however nobly conceived, is apt to bear evil fruit. The destruction of an individual evil leaves room for the development of a newer and possibly greater one. Even though man is free to act—though it is obligatory that he remain active—he must recognize that all actions fall within the workings of a fixed, balancing principle. A mature individual—one thoroughly and brutally initiated to living—is fully aware of this limitation.

It is only one-eyed people who love to advise, or have any spontaneous promptitude of action. When a man opens both his eyes, he generally sees about as many reasons for acting in any one way as in any other, and quite as many for acting in neither, and is therefore likely to leave his friends to regulate their own conduct, and also to remain quiet as regards his especial affairs till necessity shall prick him onward.(361)

"How strange it is,—the way in which we are summoned from all high purposes by these little homely necessities; all symbolizing the great fact that the earthly part of us, with its demands, takes up the greater portion of all our available force."(362) Humanity is completely and thoroughly limited. Its spiritual murmurings are feeble and infrequent. Inescapable mortal duties squeeze out daily the nobilities of existence. Thus mankind, determinedly striving for advancement, succeeds only in standing still. Even though a certain materialistic bettering of man's external state is possible, the internal core of human nature remains unaltered.

Human nature, while it is a composite of the natures of both sexes, is at no time to be identified with either of them. Woman was allotted a unique nature and function; the nature of the male, though less joyous, is equally distinct. Of the two natures, that of the male is closer to what Hawthorne meant by the term "human nature." Woman is of a softer texture, more sheltered, more spiritual than her mate. Man's very nature stands as the antithesis of all that is best in woman.

#### Man's Nature

Man's nature has little in common with that of woman, for he is

at heart both vicious and brutish. The male, if isolated from the taming charms of his mate, frequently reverts to an inborn savageness. Were it not for the restraining influence of century-old habits and customs, and were it not for the written and common laws, man might well give greater vent to his animal appetite.

It is sometimes, though less frequently the case, that this disposition to make a "joy of grief" extends to individuals of the other sex. But in us it is even less excusable and more disgusting, because it is our nature to shun the sick and afflicted; and, unless restrained by principles other than we bring into the world with us, men might follow the example of many animals in destroying the infirm of their own species. Indeed, instances of this nature might be adduced among savage nations.(363)

Man's depravity exceeds that of animals because his cruelties are much more refined. A primordial appetite for evil, combined with an aptitude for subtly formulating and satisfying it, makes man, at times, the most odious of beasts. He is perpetually capable of contriving newer and coarser cruelties. "A singular fact, that, when man is a brute, he is the most sensual and loathsome of all brutes."(364)

"Nevertheless, either Manhood must converse with Age, or Womanhood must soothe him with gentle cares, or Infancy must sport him around his chair, or his thoughts will stray into the misty region of the past, and the old man be chill and sad."(365) Man must have companionship if he is to control his indelicate urges. There is a continual need for the warm and semi-spiritual comforts found in the society of women and children. More especially do old men need a wholesome companionship if they are to prevent themselves from becoming phantom-like dwellers in the past. Man exists as a complete being only when he enters into partnership with the opposite sex.

While certain traits are in varying degrees common to the general nature of all males, numerous others are characteristic of only a limited number. Although the "public woman," for instance, was seen in sharp contrast to the true nature of womanhood, various oddities of the male nature are not set against a shining standard. Hawthorne proposes no single ennobling function to which the male of the species may fasten himself. Each observation on man's nature is a criticism of some failing peculiar to the male. Thus types, traits, abnormalities swim before the eye without the benefit of a functional standard against which to view them. Insincerity, for example, is characteristic of some men, but not necessarily of all men.

Insincerity in a man's own heart must make all his enjoyments, all that concerns him, unreal; so that his whole life must seem like a merely dramatic representation. And this would be the case, even though he were surrounded by true-hearted relatives and friends.(366)

The insincere man is doubly unfortunate in that his deceit places him out of contact with his fellow human beings and thereby prevents any possible salvation which might come to him.

Typically, man is a weak-willed creature of the winds. "In truth, there is no such thing in man's nature as a settled and full resolve, either for good or evil, except at the very moment of execution."(367) A mature man acts only when necessity demands it, and even then his deeds are often hasty and ill-timed. In the moment of action man is most fully alive, yet the determination which forces that action is but a temporary elation. The consequence is permanent. Long-suffering participation in life, and the mistaken blunderings

which are an integral part of that suffering, find surcease only in death. "When a man's eyes have grown old with gazing at the ways of the world, it does not seem such a terrible misfortune to have them bandaged."(368)

Those rare individuals who would attempt to aid man are looked upon with suspicion.

Men who attempt to do the world more good than the world is able entirely to comprehend are almost invariably held in bad odor. But yet, if the wise and good man can wait awhile, either the present generation or posterity will do him justice.(369)

In the long or providential view, an inscrutable one, noble efforts are compensated for. It is in the long look, also, that human nature takes on its distinctive sameness; for, indeed, when observed eye to eye and moment by moment the male nature exceeds that of Cleopatra in its infinite variety. When male nature is viewed from a distance, when it is seen in terms of myriad experiences, surface differences vanish and the true raw nature of man comes into focus.

"But who can estimate the power of gentle influences, whether amid material desolation or the moral winter of a man's heart?"(370) A partial improvement of that which is inherently vicious in man's nature may come through domestic modifications. As a partner in the domestic institution, man finds in his mate those qualities which temper his hardness.

Certain men, in spite of the gentle influence of womanhood, are so fundamentally mean in their own right that they violate the dignity of the natural order by aspiring for greatness. "Some men have no right to perform great deeds, or think high thoughts—and when they do

so, it is a kind of humbug. They had better keep within their own propriety."(371) Each individual has a realm of activity to which he is especially suited and to which he should restrict himself. The size and significance of one's place in an ordered universe varies with fortune and with the capacity of the individual, but the necessity for working within the limitations of one's specific nature is quite clear. Indignation—such as that which the emergence of the "public woman" aroused—is felt when any individual attempts to move beyond the boundaries of his peculiar function. While the male sphere is not specifically defined by Hawthorne, nevertheless, it does exist only within limits.

It is characteristic of man that he moves by a series of eruptions rather than at a continuous pace. "Men of uncommon intellect, who have grown morbid, possess this occasional power of mighty effort, into which they throw the life of many days, and then are lifeless for as many more."(372) There is a reserve strength which enables a person to cast his total energy into a period of intense activity; but while the consequence rankles ever afterward, the power of the initial resolution immediately departs.

Although certain actions may have favorable effects, man's goodness remains always in a theoretical realm. Evil traits are much more evident in daily experience. "There are few uglier traits of human nature than this tendency—which I now witnessed in men no worse than their neighbors—to grow cruel, merely because they possessed the power of inflicting harm."(373) Hawthorne witnessed ugliness and

imperfection whenever he observed man in action; man's nobility, however slight it might be, went relatively unnoticed.

Man's nature is often harshly represented, for man in his pride and vanity, flagrantly unaware of his imperfections, places too much faith in his own intellect. There are, indeed, many men who create false beings of themselves by working through the intellect.

There are ordinary men to whom forms are of paramount importance. Their field of action lies among the external phenomena of life. They possess vast ability in grasping, and arranging, and appropriating to themselves, the big heavy, solid unrealities, such as gold, landed estate, offices of trust and emolument, and public honors. With these materials, and with deeds of goodly aspect, done in the public eye, an individual of this class builds up, as it were, a tall and stately edifice, which, in the view of other people, and ultimately in his own view, is no other than the man's character, or the man himself.(374)

Unqualified reliance on the intellect leads man into mistaking the phenomenal for the "real." In due time the heart's message becomes inaudible. It is shut off by an ever-increasing concern with the material side of life. Thus man—in the same manner that he constructs the social order—builds a human artificiality, which comes to replace his original self. It is this tendency, this pride, this vanity, this lust for materialistic possessions and faith in a materialistically measured success, which most frequently provides for man's undoing.

"Man's own youth is the world's youth; at least, he feels as if it were, and imagines that the earth's granite substance is something not yet hardened, and which he can mould into whatever shape he likes."(375) Before youth has actually challenged the compound, he is confident of his ability to fashion life at his own discretion. In maturity he consents to his fate—accepts the fact that he is

limited and that his dream of shaping the universe was but a delusion. Death follows the middle years with great rapidity, and, in the very moment of death, man continues to reveal his nature.

But there is no one thing which men so rarely do, whatever the provocation or inducement, as to bequeath patrimonial property away from their own blood. They may love other individuals far better than their relatives,—they may even cherish dislike, or positive hatred, to the latter; but yet, in view of death, the strong prejudice of propinquity revives, and impels the testator to send down his estate in the line marked out by custom so immemorial that it looks like nature.(376)

There is a distinction implied between man's nature and man's habits. Hawthorne hints that the maternal heart and the paternal head have little in common. It is possible, even, that it is not man's true nature to provide for his young. Custom and tradition may have supplied a restraining influence which is frequently mistaken for the male nature itself.

The favorable side of man's nature, assuming that it exists, is rarely commented on. "It is often instructive to take the woman's, the private and domestic, view of a public man; nor can anything be more curious than the vast discrepancy between portraits intended for engraving and the pencil-sketches that pass from hand to hand behind the original's back."(377) A man seen in the intimate quarters of the domestic state may be more or less of a man than the public sees, but the difference is always present. Man, functioning in both the social and the domestic worlds, may well have a different code of conduct for each. The outer action, the social action, is the one on which judgments are most frequently formed. "Of most men you early know the mental gauge and measurement, and do not subsequently have

much occasion to change it."(378) "Men are so much alike in their nature, that they grow intolerable unless varied by their circumstances."(379) Hawthorne never remarked on the monotony of the feminine nature, for woman is distinguishable by the richness of her divine depths. Man, on the other hand, is consistently viewed with the animal appetite foremost.

"But a man cannot always decide for himself whether his own heart is cold or warm."(380) It is an interesting corollary to the "head-heart" distinction that coldness of heart is identified with a lack of love for humanity. A warm heart, through love and through intuition, opens the way to religion and "reality." Considered on a lighter plane, man's love is a comic vanity, a pathetic expression of masculine ego. "A bachelor always feels himself defrauded, when he knows or suspects that any woman of his acquaintance has given herself away."(381) There is present in the male heart, however, a steady thirst for companionship, for brotherhood. "And yet the natural man cries out against the philosophy that rejects beggars. It is a thousand to one that they are imposters; but yet we do ourselves a wrong by hardening our hearts against them."(382) In all but the most hardened of male natures, there is still some small sympathy for humanity.

Hawthorne read widely in the writings of Swift and Voltaire.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Marion L. Kesselring, Hawthorne's Reading: 1828-1850, pp. 62-63 (Index). During the period August 23, 1830 to November 20, 1830, Hawthorne made seventeen withdrawals at the Salem Athenaeum from an eighteen volume set of Swift's writings. From October 2, 1829 to

The misanthropy of Swift he found distasteful, yet it is not improbable that the romancer found an echo of his own thoughts in Swift's caustic evaluation of human nature. Although Hawthorne reached some of the same conclusions in regard to human nature which Swift and, to a lesser extent, Voltaire had entertained, he arrived at his conclusions through vastly different thought processes. "I see many specimens of mankind, but come to the conclusion that there is but little variety among them, after all."(383) Man's depravity was a moral and a religious fact; it was everywhere observable. The novelist never went as far as Voltaire in ridiculing man; nor did he degrade him with a Swiftian lash. Hawthorne recognized man's depravity, but he always held out a hope, even if it were an abstract one, that man's nature might someday wisely open itself to a brotherhood of the heart. Then, too, Hawthorne would allow a tempering of man's nature through domesticity and, in some instances, through art. Above all, he would provide man, in spite of his highly imperfect physical life, with an immortal home.

Like Swift, Hawthorne admired individual men—his intimate friendships were extremely warm ones—but put little trust in the race. It is not that he detested the race, but rather that he was too aware of man's tendency to err at every given opportunity. Man's mighty accomplishments are satirically applauded. "What great things man has contrived, and is continually performing! What a noble brute he is!"(384) It may be that the novelist takes some pride in man's material progress. However, the word "contrived" is often used in a

derogatory sense—as in the phrase, "contrived by the perverted ingenuity of man." A recognition of the unique connotation which "contrived" held, coupled with the normal connotation of the word "brute," would lead one to suspect that Hawthorne was sometimes playful if not downright satirical.

Perhaps it is best that the populace is able to keep faith in a few elevated men who are actually little different from themselves.

It is for the high interest of the world not to insist upon finding out that its greatest men are, in a certain sense, very much the same kind of men as the rest of us, and often a little worse; because a common mind cannot properly digest such a discovery, nor even know the true proportion of the great man's good and evil, nor how small a part of him it was that touched our muddy or dusty earth.(385)

Ordered existence is necessary. Any severe interruption of life's daily sequence—whether it be war, panic, or a breach of trust—is apt to disorganize the not too solid citizenry. It is undeniable that even the loftiest of mortals must tread the same muddy pathway as the ragged beggar.

Most men, whatever their natures, are forced to lead a life of continual compromise with society, with themselves, and with their ideals. Earthly pressures are too demanding. Only a rare individual—the artist, for instance—can rise above the rankling necessities of physical existence.

At any rate, it must be a remarkably true man who can keep his own elevated conception of truth when the lower feeling of a multitude is assailing his natural sympathies, and who can speak out frankly the best that there is in him, when by adulterating it a little, or a good deal, he knows that he may make it ten times as acceptable to the audience.(386)

"Methinks it is not good for old men to be much together."(387)

Old men have experienced much of life, have dwelt long in a brotherhood of sorrow; they are so thoroughly satiated that the very presence of one aged creature acts as a depressant on another. Strangely enough, the aged male remains youthful in his own eyes.

Youth, however eclipsed for a season, is undoubtedly the proper, permanent, and genuine condition of man; and if we look closely into this dreary delusion of growing old, we shall find that it never absolutely succeeds in laying hold of our innermost convictions.(388)

Male nature, unless it is well-tempered by the human affections, maintains its stubborn propensity for evil. Love's laws, arising as they do from the moral sentiment, are too frequently trampled in the process of earning a livelihood. Man, in his attempt to conquer life's unconquerable compound is permanently and fatally hardened by the struggle. Yet within the male nature there resides the means of improvement. Hawthorne did not believe that man's nature had improved during the centuries, nor did he believe that a true bettering was probable in the near future; but he did believe that improvement, though extremely unlikely, was possible.

The law of matter imposes rather severe limitations on the power of man's mind. Yet man vainly persists in working through his intellect. Man goes farthest wrong in giving an easy credence to his own meager abilities. Woman differs from man in that she is not so prone to make this mistake. Then, too, woman's primal nature--the purity of which Hawthorne would protect by limiting woman's function--is superior to that of man. The unsheltered male, with his brutish legacies, is coarsened by his daily engagements with life. Once

restricted by the binding social law, man's nature becomes slightly more admirable. Yet beneath his refined outer clothing, man remains a Caliban.

There is no true hatred on Hawthorne's part for the individual man or for a group of men. Actually, there is much sympathy. The sympathetic impulse loses force, however, when placed beside an overly keen consciousness of man's imperfection, or, in darker terms, of man's depravity. This awareness led Hawthorne into an instantaneous distrust of that which was created by man.

#### Individual Natures

In addition to his rather elaborate characterization of the male and female natures, the novelist was tempted to comment at random on certain traits of human nature which were applicable only to specific types of individuals. It is a general truth, for example, that most people are somewhat vain. "Nothing, in the whole circle of human vanities, takes stronger hold of the imagination than this affair of having a portrait painted."(389) But all humanity is not vain to a like degree. In his appraisal of individual characteristics as opposed to typical ones, Hawthorne recognizes the great variety of human nature.

"Strange that the finer and deeper nature, whether in man or woman, while possessed of every other delicate instinct, should so often lack that most invaluable one of preserving itself from contamination with what is of a baser kind!"(390) The very presence of man's imperfect body makes eventual contamination unavoidable. No

matter how pure the spirit of an individual might be, his body is forced into daily encounters with vulgar substances. Unfortunately, certain individuals with a high potential for a rich and good life find their natures thwarted by ill-fated marital or professional alliances. "To choose another figure, it is sad that hearts which have their well-spring in the infinite, and contain inexhaustible sympathies, should ever be doomed to pour themselves into shallow vessels, and thus lavish their rich affections on the ground."(391)

An aesthetic intolerance of all that is not beautiful fully revealed itself in the Hawthornian deification of womanhood. Beauty was seized as the supreme ideal. Individuals born without beauty are to be heartlessly condemned. "An ugly person, with tact, may make a bad face and figure pass very tolerably, and more than tolerably. Ugliness without tact is horrible;—it ought to be lawful to extirpate such wretches."(392) There is no humane sympathy for the ugly. There is, instead, an extremely sensitive if not abnormal revulsion.

With a good bit of psychological insight, Hawthorne speculates on humanity's timid creatures. People who are quite vigorous in vocal proclamations often grow passive when action is required. "It is remarkable that persons who speculate the most boldly often conform with the most perfect quietude to the external regulations of society. The thought suffices them, without investing itself in the flesh and blood of action."(393) The physical appearance of timidity may sometimes cloak a forceful nature. "But these transparent natures are often deceptive in their depth; those pebbles at the bottom of the

fountain are farther from us than we think."(394) Not until a crisis arises, not until action is obligatory, may an individual's true measurement be taken.

It is typical of certain natures that under extreme circumstances they should find solace in a daydream.

Individuals whose affairs have reached an utterly desperate crisis almost invariably keep themselves alive with hopes, so much the more airily magnificent as they have the less of solid matter within their grasp whereof to mould any judicious and moderate expectation of good.(395)

In contrast to the dreamer, other people—as was the case with the poet and the novelist—are destined to move on to more numerous and more difficult trials. Success stays one jump ahead, yet each newer and higher effort brings with it an intangible but highly valuable compensation. "But thus it always is with persons who are destined to perform great things. What they have already done seems less than nothing. What they have taken in hand to do seems worth toil, danger, and life itself."(396)

Among mankind's mass there are strangely constituted natures for whom the divine obligations of parenthood are a festering thorn.

But there are wild, forcible, unrestricted characters, on whom the necessity and even duty of loving their own child is a sort of barrier to love. They perhaps do not love their own traits, which they recognize in their children; they shrink from their own features in the reflection presented by these little mirrors. A certain strangeness and unlikeness (such as gives poignancy to the love between the sexes) would excite a livelier affection.(397)

Taken together, the observations on individual aspects of human nature do not provide a stimulating thought pattern. They present no standard, no unique theme. In a subtle way, they do illustrate the

novelist's ability to single out and effectively characterize peculiar quirks of human nature. They illustrate, too, an ability to move behind a firm externality and grasp those internal truths which are seldom foreshadowed in surface forms.

### Interactions

Adjustments between personalities are frequently but not always predictable. From his knowledge of mankind's inner constitution, Hawthorne was able to forecast with some accuracy those human interactions which occur in everyday life. A breach of the affections, for example, is seen to be tragic, for "It is perilous to make a chasm in human affections; not that they gape so long and wide—but so quickly close again!"(398) Each heartbreak is more tragic in that it is so readily healed. It is difficult to realize that time makes such rapid adjustments. People in distress—those unfortunates who are continually fronted by barriers and chasms—will instantly give way before a sincere expression of sympathy. "People in difficulty and distress, or in any manner at odds with the world, can endure a vast amount of harsh treatment, and perhaps be only the stronger for it; whereas they give way at once before the simplest expression of what they perceive to be genuine sympathy."(399)

Hawthorne constantly ran the dangers of one who concentrates too coldly on a study of fellow humans.

It is not, I apprehend, a healthy kind of mental occupation, to devote ourselves too exclusively to the study of individual men and women. If the person under examination be one's self, the result is pretty certain to be diseased action of the heart, almost before we can snatch a second glance. Or, if we take the freedom

to put a friend under our microscope, we thereby insulate him from many of his true relations, magnify his peculiarities, inevitably tear him into parts, and, of course, patch him very clumsily together again. What wonder, then, should we be frightened by the aspect of a monster, which, after all,—though we can point to every feature of his deformity in the real personage,—may be said to have been created by ourselves.(400)

The novelist feared the probable distortion which a calculated and almost disinterested examination of humanity might well present. He was also aware that an action, a reaction, or an interaction can be fully understood only in terms of the total being; and that an outside observer's best efforts at characterization are always partial.

Serious thoughts normally call for indirect expression.

(When individuals approach one another with deep purposes on both sides, they seldom come at once to the matter which they have most at heart. They dread the electric shock of too sudden contact with it. A natural impulse leads them to steal gradually onward, hiding themselves, as it were, behind a closer, and still a closer topic, until they stand face to face with the true point of interest.(401))

Man tends to build gradually to his chief topic of interest; he is rarely open and immediate in expressing his deeper concerns. Then, too, there is a formidable barrier separating all individuals. Society's law often helps to formulate and intensify that barrier—helps to prevent a free interplay between personalities—especially when one or the other of the persons concerned is a reputable worthy. "There is a decorum which restrains you (unless you happen to be a police-constable) from breaking through a crust of plausible respectability, even when you are certain that there is a knave beneath it."(402)

Interactions between individuals do not always follow a set pattern. An analysis of the human personality requires that certain

psychological conjectures be proposed, yet these generalities forecast only the probable nature of a given interaction. Even though such statements cannot provide for the human variable, they may still contain typical or hypothetical truths.

It is the hardest thing in the world for a noble nature--the hardest and the most shocking--to be convinced that a fellow-being is going to do a wrong thing, and the consciousness of one's own inviolability renders it still more difficult to believe that one's self is to be the object of the wrong.(403)

Human interactions are frequently symbolized in a materialistic cloaking. "There are really, if you stop to think about it, few sadder spectacles in the world than a ragged coat, or a sciled and shabby gown, at a festival."(404) Yet one thing is certain: two individuals cannot be brought together without an ensuing reaction of some kind. "Nothing is surer, however, than that, if we suffer ourselves to be drawn into too close proximity with people, if we over-estimate the degree of our proper tendency towards them, or theirs towards us, a reaction is sure to follow."(405)

The commentary on people as they relate to one another is quite at random and at times even superficial; yet on numerous occasions it moves deeper into the human mystery than the American writers prior to Hawthorne had dared to go. If it teaches little of Hawthorne's ideas, it teaches much of his ability to ferret out those psychological relationships which play such a major role in human life. In studying out the reactions of sensitive and solitary people, the novelist had gone a long way toward understanding that one type of personality. It is highly impracticable that one writer attempt to comprehend in one lifetime the infinite

types of personalities which do exist. Many of Hawthorne's observations on human nature are essentially miscellaneous in that they are occasioned by particular people in particular circumstances. While they have comparatively little adhesion, while they do not fall neatly into a systematized and fully developed thought field, they are of intrinsic interest in that they evidence the writer's talent for successfully delving into the human personality at almost any one given point.

#### The Nature of the Public

A Democrat of the first half of the nineteenth century reportedly put his trust in the people. Hawthorne, a peculiar sort of an aristocratic-democrat, held the public in low regard. "The ideas of people in general are not raised higher than the roofs of the houses. All their interests extend over the earth's surface in a layer of that thickness. The meeting-house steeple reaches out of their sphere."(406) In general, the public contents itself with that which lies upon life's external crust. It is so accustomed to the artificial, that a message from "reality" would come as a distinct shock. To Hawthorne, who lacked the faith of a good Jacksonian democrat, the public is little better than a herd of unthinking brutes.

Although human nature itself is unchangeable, the outer conditions of a people frequently undergo a movement toward conservatism. In developing from its raw state, the public occasionally learns a lesson from history. A leveling or stabilizing process takes place within the external aspect of living. There is no

internal change.

The more a people thinks, and the more it learns, the less will it be acted upon by frenzied impulses; as knowledge is diffused, popularity will become more a matter of judgment than feeling; and the great men of futurity will seldom rise so high, or fall so low, as the great men of the past.(407)

As is the case with anything human, the public has a heart which may be aroused to sympathetic action. "The public is despotic in its temper; it is capable of denying common justice, when too strenuously demanded as a right; but quite as frequently it awards more than justice, when the appeal is made, as despots love to have it made, entirely to its generosity."(408) In this instance, "generosity" stands as a symbol for the "heart" in the familiar head-heart distinction. Usually, the heart--the supreme Hawthornian symbol for all that goes beyond mere intellect—is mentioned outright.

When an uninstructed multitude attempts to see with its eyes, it is exceedingly apt to be deceived. When, however, it forms its judgment, as it usually does, on the intuitions of its great and warm heart, the conclusions thus attained are often so profound and so unerring, as to possess the character of truths supernaturally revealed.(409)

"Reality" can never be photographed by the eye, nor intellectually arrived at by the mind of man. It is only through an exercise of the intuition that the artificial may be pushed aside.

"So let each century set up the monuments of those whom it admires and loves; and there is no harm, but, on the whole, much pleasure in having such a reward before the world's eyes."(410) It is the gullible nature of the public that it should believe wholeheartedly in the moment and in the men and the events of that moment. The public at any given instance considers itself the crowning

achievement of all that has preceded it in history. In a natural but rather pathetic display of egotism it yields its superiority to no one. When commenting upon talent and genius, Hawthorne had repeatedly denied a plenitude of true greatness. Yet the naive manner in which each generation deludes itself by celebrating its apparently great men has no real harm in it. "It is wonderful how few names there are that one cares anything about, a hundred years after their departure; but perhaps each generation acts in good faith, in canonizing its own men."(411)

"I wonder when men will begin to erect monuments to human error; hitherto, their pillars and statues have been only for the sake of glorification. But after all, the present fashion may be the best and whol [e] somest."(412) It is the nature of the public that it should erect monuments to its noble accomplishments. Since man goes wrong more often than he goes right, since error always has been and always will be in the ascendancy, any attempt to dedicate monuments to error would soon exhaust the available sculptural materials.

Hawthorne never had the faith which a "good Democrat" should have had in the populace. Public nature is seen as the composite of the ills of individual natures. It is but grouped depravity. Granted that the public has the same abstract potential for goodness present in man's nature, it stubbornly insists, like man himself, on contriving by means of its intellect. Then, too, Hawthorne was much more of an aristocrat, especially in his prejudices, than is commonly supposed. The novelist did not write with the populace in mind; in his political

life he scarcely regarded the opportunity of serving the public as a noble challenge. Although Hawthorne neither hated nor feared the great mass of the people, he was overly conscious of the public's insensitive and unthinking nature, and quite pessimistic concerning its general caliber and ability.

#### The Nature of the Sick

Sickness, while it is generally thought of as a temporary condition in man's total journey, can become in rare cases the predominant force in an individual's being. Especially is this true of those persons who are chronically ill or disabled.

All persons chronically diseased are egotists, whether the disease be of the mind or body; whether it be sin, sorrow, or merely the more tolerable calamity of some endless pain, or mischief among the cords of mortal life. Such individuals are made acutely conscious of a self, by the torture in which it dwells. Self, therefore, grows to be so prominent an object with them that they cannot but present it to the face of every casual passer-by. There is a pleasure—perhaps the greatest of which the sufferer is susceptible—in displaying the wasted or ulcerated limb, or the cancer in the breast; and the fouler the crime, with so much the more difficulty does the perpetrator prevent it from thrusting up its snake-like head to frighten the world; for it is that cancer, or that crime, which constitutes their respective individuality.(413)

A man under these rather extreme conditions no longer retains his nature as an artist, politician, or farmer; for the presence of the illness is allowed to direct his whole personality—to become, in fact, his individual nature.

"Wherever there is a heart and an intellect, the diseases of the physical frame are tinged with the peculiarities of these."(414) A physical illness may have mental origins. The notion that a person's

mental and emotional constitution may influence if not determine actual bodily health is a widely accepted one. Acquaintances may reflect the horror of an illness and thereby cause the patient greater discomfort. "The sick in mind, and perhaps, in body, are rendered more darkly and hopelessly so by the manifold reflection of their disease, mirrored back from all quarters in the deportment of those about them; they are compelled to inhale the poison of their own breath, in infinite repetition."(415) When a sick person finds himself the center of attraction he is apt to grow morose. "We are apt to make sickly people more morbid, and unfortunate people more miserable, by endeavoring to adapt our deportment to their especial and individual needs."(416)

Hawthorne was amazingly alert to the psychological nature of illness. While his analysis is scarcely minute, it should be remembered that the psychology of the day was in an extremely crude state. In one instance, the novelist goes beyond the actual vicissitudes of illness itself and poses a deeper inquiry. "When the machinery of human life has once been stopped by sickness or other impediment, it often needs an impulse to set it going again, even after it is nearly wound up."(417) In the commentary on society, the fact that an individual who has once lost his place may have difficulty in re-entering the marching ranks of humanity was stated with force and certainty. Illness, then, can be viewed as a condition which brings man to a temporary standstill, and allows an ever-moving humanity to go on ahead. In this perspective, the aftermath of an illness is

hazardous in that the individual concerned may have difficulty in regaining his proper place in society, especially if he has been long absent from it.

#### The Twilight Zone

Man's mind is caught up under certain conditions into a subconscious or twilight zone where the basic truths of life are apt to break through unhampered by materialistic barriers. This passive preternatural state, whether brought on by fatigue, sleep, extreme anxiety, or corporeal wasting, betokens a new and separate mode of existence. Its nature is of two worlds—a conscious and a subconscious one. Here in a state of supreme passivity, the individual may receive direct communication from that "reality" which remains hidden from his conscious eye. Here the extraneous weight of material presences is melted away; here spiritual energies are at work.

The sleeping mind is habitually receptive to messages from a "reality" which is normally lost beneath the seeming solidity of phenomenal substances. "Truth often finds its way to the mind close muffled in robes of sleep, and then speaks with uncompromising directness of matters in regard to which we practise an unconscious self-deception during our waking moments."(418) That deeper and truer life which flows beneath the grosser currents of the ordinary one finds in the twilight zone its opportunity for entering the heart of man. "The mind is in a sad state when Sleep, the all-involving, cannot confine her spectres within the dim region of her sway, but suffers them to break forth, affrighting this actual life with secrets

that perchance belong to a deeper one."(419)

"When the heart is full of care, or the mind much occupied, the summer, and the sunshine, and the moonlight, are but a gleam and a glimmer—a vague dream, which does not come within us, but only makes itself imperfectly perceptible without."(420) At times the continually present physical form, man's body, is so depressed by troubles that externality no longer registers on the inmost man. Life's outer procession continues, but the inner being is oblivious to it. On other occasions, man's spirit deserts his body.

There is sad confusion, indeed, when the spirit thus flits away into the past, or into the more awful future, or, in any manner, steps across the spaceless boundary betwixt its own region and the actual world; where the body remains to guide itself as best it may, with little more than the mechanism of animal life. It is like death, without death's quiet privilege,—its freedom from mortal care.(421)

Man exists—for the time, at least—in a state of supreme helplessness. Life's cares remain with him, gall him, but death's freedom is denied.

If a man is reduced to a twilight state of being, he often finds that he can no longer function efficiently as a member of society. He is not able to keep the necessary foothold which it is so perilous to lose.

Nothing gives a sadder sense of decay than this loss or suspension of the power to deal with unaccustomed things, and to keep up with the swiftness of the passing moment. It can merely be a suspended animation; for, were the power actually to perish, there would be little use of immortality. We are less than ghosts, for the time being, whenever this calamity befalls us.(422)

A person so subdued by mental, emotional or physical circumstance that he can no longer keep up with the endless onward movement of life, "shivers" in his private solitude of separation.

Hawthorne's twilight zone is somewhat comparable to a hypnotic state:

But there is a species of intuition,—either a spiritual lie, or the subtle recognition of a fact,—which comes to us in a reduced state of the corporeal system. The soul gets the better of the body, after wasting illness, or when a vegetable diet may have mingled too much ether in the blood. Vapors then rise up to the brain, and take shapes that often image falsehood, but sometimes truth. The spheres of our companions have, at such periods, a vastly greater influence upon our own than when robust health gives us a repellent and self-defensive energy.(423)

Here the individual is perilously open to various external influences. The suggestions of his friends are as pillars to his weakened mind. Since he has no will, he is easy prey to the will of others.

No matter how outmoded the Hawthornian nomenclature—vegetable diet, ether in the blood, vapors—the situation which he describes—that unique state of being in which an individual dwells in two worlds yet in neither—has psychological validity. Modern psychiatrists often attempt to reduce their patients by hypnotism, or by some other less spectacular method, into the same twilight zone of which Hawthorne wrote. Here, with his patient in a relaxed passiveness, the psychiatrist attempts to draw out those truths which lie beneath the surface of individual lives. Hawthorne was concerned with the nature of this mysterious zone. Perhaps he felt that the reduction of physical actuality, characteristic of the twilight zone, might provide spiritual insights by a partial removal of the foremost barrier to spirituality.

#### Purpose and Power

The twilight zone is but a temporary state in an individual's

nature. There are, by contrast, more permanent and equally peculiar states of existence which arise from physical beginnings. In the twilight zone, the materialistic is minimized. In the nature which centers itself upon power or a guiding purpose, the materialistic is emphasized to the utmost. Thus it is that an individual's desire, or the strength and rank achieved in the fulfilment of that desire, may become that person. The individual no longer functions with the unique nature which was once his birthright, but becomes rather the embodiment of rank, power, or purpose. Instead of the individual's achieving his goal and making it a part of himself, he is swallowed by and lost inside his own objective.

Once the apparently solid presence of rank has thoroughly evidenced itself, it becomes its own excuse for being.

There is something so massive, stable, and almost irresistibly imposing in the exterior presentation of established rank and great possessions, that their very existence seems to give them a right to exist; at least, so excellent a counterfeit of right, that few poor and humble men have moral force enough to question it, even in their secret minds.(424)

Strength defies all challengers. "Strength is incomprehensible by weakness, and, therefore, the more terrible. There is no greater bugbear than a strong-willed relative in the circle, of his own connections."(425) The strong-willed person, the man of rank and prestige, Hawthorne saw as a rather definite personality type. Needless to say, the novelist little admired him.

It is unfortunate that the male intellect often consecrates itself to one supreme purpose and in so doing forfeits its individuality. However noble an avowed aim may be, the process of its

achievement is strewn with accompanying evils. Those evils which the progression toward a purpose thrusts onto the innocent bystander are not nearly so fatal as that unalterable evil which a man sworn to a single purpose brings upon himself.

This is always true of those men who have surrendered themselves to an overruling purpose. It does not so much impel them from without, nor even operate as a motive power within, but grows incorporate with all that they think and feel, and finally converts them into little else save that one principle.(426)

"This sense of fixedness—stony intractability—seems to belong to people who, instead of hope, which exalts everything into an airy, gaseous exhilaration, have a fixed and dogged purpose, around which everything congeals and crystallizes."(427) In pledging himself to a purpose, man shuts himself off from the partial comforts which life may afford. In effect, he chooses his own form of isolation, and makes his aim a barrier between himself and humanity. Perhaps Hawthorne overstresses his point, perhaps he makes monsters of his observed subjects by speaking in too firm a generalization, yet he is but commenting to the best of his ability on the sundry aspects of human nature which fell before his eyes.

#### The Nature of a Hero

In his youth, Hawthorne cherished some grand and noble ideas concerning heroes, although he had never personally met one. Later in life, he came to doubt the possibility of heroism. He grew increasingly aware of the scattered handful of great men which history could offer. At age sixteen, the youth had noted with anticipation that: "Perhaps the noblest species of courage is in a good cause, to

brave the bad opinion of the world."(428) Thirty years later, the novelist had settled into a firm recognition of the fact that society makes the man, and that the individual does not majestically shape his own fortune.

Great men have to be lifted upon the shoulders of the whole world, in order to conceive their great ideas, or perform their great deeds. That is, there must be an atmosphere of greatness round about them;—a hero cannot be a hero, unless in a heroic world.(429)

"The greatest obstacle to being heroic is the doubt whether one may not be going to prove one's self a fool; the truest heroism is to resist the doubt; and the profoundest wisdom to know when it ought to be resisted, and when to be obeyed."(430)

Hawthorne was reluctant to admit—and necessarily so, in the light of his total philosophy—that any man could accomplish much good, could function nobly, without producing much evil at the same time. Heroism is looked upon with suspicion, for it is unlikely that man's basic nature would permit his rise to such heights. "How singular it is, that the personal courage of famous warriors should be so often called in question!"(431) The supposed chivalry of antique days is vigorously questioned.

I doubt whether there ever was any age of chivalry; it certainly was no chivalric sentiment that made men case themselves in impenetrable iron, and ride about in iron prisons, fearfully peeping at their enemies through little slits and gimlet-holes. The unprotected breast of a private soldier must have shamed his leaders, in those days.(432)

Although Hawthorne had little to say about the true nature of heroism, his reaction to the heroic is provocative. The novelist seemingly had little heroism in his own bosom. He never warmly

espoused a cause; he looked with distrust upon those individual's who did. Although he would defend his ideals and friendships under pressure, as instanced in his stand for the unpopular Franklin Pierce, he never spoke of ideals which were worth fighting for. If Hawthorne's personality lacked any one component, it was enthusiasm. A hero is a person capable of shaping the universe. The universe which Hawthorne knew was not that malleable.

#### Proverbs on Human Nature

Approximately twenty of Hawthorne's observations on human nature are proverbial. They are short and to the point; unfortunately, they have little depth. Yet their peculiar quality, their strange limitation is of interest far beyond the merit of the statements themselves.

The shorter time we have to enjoy our riches, the more we wish to amass them.(433)

Happy is it, and strange, that the lighter sorrows are those from which dreams are chiefly fabricated.(434)

Is not the kindred of a common fate a closer tie than that of birth?(435)

All really educated men, whether they have studied in the halls of a University, or in a cottage or a workshop, are essentially self-educated.(436)

Nobody will use other people's experience, nor have any of his own till it is too late to use it.(437)

Nothing is so intolerable as a little wit and a great desire of showing it.(438)

Yes, old friend; and a quiet heart will make a dog-day temperate.(439)

It is strange what sensations of sublimity may spring from a very humble source.(440)

It is scarcely decorous, however, to speak all, even when we speak impersonally.(441)

The moment when a man's head drops off is seldom or never, I am inclined to think, precisely the most agreeable of his life.(442)

Next to the lightest heart, the heaviest is apt to be most playful.(443)

For, one of the hardest things in the world is to see the difference between real dangers and imaginary ones.(444)

The moral effect of being without a settled abode is very wearisome.(445)

No man who needs a monument, ever ought to have one.(446)

The antiquarian is apt to spoil the objects that interest him.(447)

Only a young traveller can have patience to write his travels.(448)

(For nobody has any conscience about adding to the improbabilities of a marvellous tale.(449))

There is no estimating or believing, till we come to know it, what foolery lurks latent in the breasts of very sensible people.(450)

The nomadic life has great advantages, if we can find tents ready pitched for us at every stage.(451)

Nathaniel Hawthorne had little in common with the recognized proverb stylists, Franklin and Emerson. Franklin specialized in giving practical advice to an industrious and crafty Yankee populace. Hawthorne had noted that "only one-eyed people give advice"; he was content with reporting the true state of life as he saw it. Hawthorne's observations are descriptive rather than prescriptive. Sin, for example, is defined through active instances; or in terms of the

conditions which it provokes. Hawthorne could not prescribe, for he knew no prescriptions which would work. Ben Franklin, to the contrary, was quite practical in his own proverbs; he spoke in terms of materialistic success. Hawthorne wryly comments on human foibles and singularities. He was incapable of the Franklinian pictorial proverb.

Emerson wrote blithely of the God in man. He hammered out gem-incrusted proverbs sufficient to drive an individual on to greater self-reliance. Emerson thought man more significant than life itself. Life is shaped by the hands of a man who has found God in himself. Hawthorne, in sharp contrast, felt that life itself was quite rigid, and that it moulded and controlled the individual. Forces, institutions, compounds were infinitely stronger than the will of the individual. Emersonian proverbs contain an active and unrestricted declaration of faith in the power of the individual. Hawthorne's inmost convictions forbade a similar faith.

Both Franklin and Emerson reached large audiences with their proverbial bits of wisdom. The former instructed the American public in materialism; the latter, in idealism. Both gave golden nuggets of wisdom toward which an individual might strive; both gave maxims for the proper ordering of one's conduct. Both assumed that life is pliable. Hawthorne felt that life is restricted by the very elements of which it is composed. Success is not the acquisition of materialistic goods which a Franklin might advocate, or the idealistic self-reliance which an Emerson would propose; but it is, in actuality, little more than a recognition of and acquiescence to the compound of

life. Success cannot come by accumulating marble, or by denying the existence of mud; it can come only from a careful treading of life's surfaces.

Life is a complex and solemn affair, but a superbly moral one. Hawthorne found no one proverb or group of proverbs onto which he could fasten his faith. He saw only partial exits, and even they were beset with numerous obstructions. Hawthorne was well qualified to observe life; he excelled at steeping his observations in thought and pouring them into rich literary moulds. He was not capable of writing proverbs in the American sense of the word, for he did not presume to give advice. The more general or the more practical a statement became, the more empty of true meaning it was likely to be. It is only when the novelist is reflecting on the underlying nature of the life around him that he is in his element.

"Hawthorne was always very tender of the feelings of others; and though he could not help perceiving the oddities and frailties of those about him, the perception implied no uncharitableness on his part, and was recorded only for his private satisfaction."<sup>79</sup> Hawthorne's observations on human nature are unduly limited; he was unable to take the practical approach of a Franklin, or the optimistic approach of an Emerson. In essence, Hawthorne realized that humanity was so constituted by its nature that it must be continually chastened by life. Human nature makes a truly successful life difficult if not

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<sup>79</sup> Julian Hawthorne, Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife (Boston, 1884), II, 43.

impossible; for the instant a man begins to move about, he is apt to meet with disaster.

Hawthorne wrote about failures. Both the depraved nature of humanity itself and the grayness of the compound in which mankind must live forbid success. The majority of human errors may be attributed to the intellect; they are brought on by pride. If man would but listen to his heart, he might then find his way cleared; at least, the human situation would be vastly improved. This is the one bit of advice which Hawthorne felt free to give. It is not much with which to challenge a universe, but it is better than no hope at all.

## CHAPTER IX

### NATIONAL NATURES

In the setting forth of those features which distinguish various nationalities, certain familiar Hawthornian principles find additional development in a more concrete but frequently prejudiced thought area. Whereas human nature maintains a deep and constant quality regardless of the race, creed, or political subdivision within which it may fall, national natures are to be determined on the basis of their surface uniqueness. The formalized depiction of a national nature—that group of characteristics markedly confined within given borders—is, when contrasted to a probing of human nature, quite superficial. Although human nature is the same for all mankind, an Englishman, a Frenchman, or an Italian does possess a peculiar national nature by which he may be set apart from the remaining body of humanity. While the inner nature of an individual is fixed, his external or apparent nature as a member of a national group furnishes a new and separate field of inquiry.

Even though his mind normally functioned on deep and abstract levels—as reflected by the "sin to society" thought pattern—Hawthorne found time to record surface distinctions. On occasion, the portrayal of a national nature is elevated by an especially keen insight. More frequently, patriotism, provincialism, Puritanism and

prejudice dictate what appear as carefully considered judgments. The commentary on national natures affords a new and valuable inquiry into Hawthorne's developing philosophy. It springs from a different kind of thinking. While it admittedly lacks depth, it is colorfully characterized by the same sharpness of perception encountered in more complex and shadowy thought fields.

#### The English

People, places, and things American are decidedly superior to the best which a visitor may encounter in England. Of this, Hawthorne was certain. "Underlying his writings on England, it might merely be pointed out, there is a solid sub-stratum of what we may call, for lack of a better word, Americanism."<sup>80</sup> Englishmen are less physically attractive and less well-mannered than Americans. Especially does the English landscape and climate suffer when compared to that of its former colony.

In spite of the severe criticisms which he hurled at everything English, in spite of the frequently bitter antagonism from which he never freed himself, Hawthorne was emotionally attracted to England. In truth, the criticism of England consists of two separate and conflicting sets of ideas. The first and weaker of the two, an attraction, was born of a cultural reverence for England's traditional grandeur. The second and stronger, a repulsion, was rooted in the patriotic pride which an American felt for his fledgling democracy.

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<sup>80</sup>Randall Stewart, "Hawthorne in England: The Patriotic Native in the Note-Books," New England Quarterly, VIII (March 1935), 13.

The appeal which England might awaken in an American was continually forced to give ground before a more deep-seated animosity. But then, on a longer visit, the English grow more palatable. The further along one goes in Hawthorne's acquaintanceship with England, 1853 to 1860, the less severe the criticisms become. Yet, even after he had come to respect the English people, long after the heart had gone out of his Anglophobia, Hawthorne continued to berate the English from time to time.

But the decidedly toned-down comments of 1860 are a long way from the caustic criticisms of 1854. "I think the social rank of Englishmen (always conscious of somebody above them) prevents them from having any dignity in their manner."(452) Hawthorne, speaking as a patriot and a democrat, would deny the Englishman the one quality in which he took the warmest pride—his dignity. The observations on England, even though they seem unnecessarily prejudiced and harsh, are given in a straightforward endeavor to point out those significant peculiarities which mark the measurement of a people. England's citizenry was repeatedly denied those attributes which were traditionally granted as a birthright—dignity and polish.

Englishmen are not made of polishable substance—not of marble, but rather of red free-stone. There is a kind of roughness and uncouthness in the most cultivated of them. After some conversance with them as a people, you learn to distinguish true gentlemen among them; but at first it seems as if there were none.(453)

Plump and pompous matrons, so frequently encountered in English society, offend the ideal of womanhood. Beautiful and slender American maidens are infinitely more pleasing to the senses. Hawthorne was

seldom impressed with England's women. Although an occasional exception escaped condemnation, the great bulk of English femininity he looked upon with a cold eye. "I really and truly believe that the entire body of American washerwomen would present more grace than the entire body of English ladies, were both to be shown up together."(454)

"An Englishman's aspect and behavior never shocks, and never fascinates."(455) The English are accused of dullness; theirs is the mode of a weighty but middle-class respectability. Any movement beyond that prescribed mode is incompatible with the nature of the people. In moments of extremely vain patriotism, Hawthorne was likely to suggest the annexation of England. "The truth is, I love England so much that I want to annex it, and it is by no means beyond the scope of possibility that we may do so, though hardly in my lifetime."(456) "I shall be true to my country, and get along with John Bull as well as I can. The time will come, sooner or later, when the old fellow will look to us for his salvation."(457) Possibly, the novelist felt that the England of the 1850's was entering a genuine period of decline. More probably, the immodest proposals stem from a natural desire to stand up to and strike back at the England of which America was so recently a colony. Youthful memories of the War of 1812 may have provided a background of hostility which never quite subsided.

"It is good for the moral nature of an American to live in England, among a more simple and natural people than ourselves."(458) It is indeed strange that a comparison, opposite from the one which is normally expected, should be made with such certainty. Hawthorne

assumed the existence of an American culture which assuredly did not measure up to the high level of his published views. He delighted in turning back onto the English those very criticisms which English travelers almost unanimously made of America. Hawthorne felt that Englishmen disliked Americans, and like a little boy he reciprocated.

If an Englishman were individually acquainted with all our twenty-five millions of Americans—and liked every man of them, and believed that each man of those millions was a Christian, honest, upright, and kind,—he would doubt, despise, and hate them in the aggregate, however he might love and honor the individuals.(459)

Allegiance to nobility is seriously questioned. "It is queer how the English uphold their nobility as an institution, yet ridicule and abuse the individual members."(460) Since mankind is leveled by sin and sorrow, since human nature is limited and constant, it may be doubted whether the nobility—however materialistically well off they may be—are actually any better, or for that matter any different, from those lesser persons who would pay tribute. Yet the peculiar psychology of English national pride, while it may allow single attacks, ever protects its ingrained ties with royalty. The most typical English trait, one found throughout the social hierarchy, has received such universal damning that there is little need for recording it. "This English narrowness is very queer, and is just as much a characteristic of gentlemen of education and culture, as of clowns."(461)

If one symbolic institution may be permitted to stand for all that is most thoroughly English, it is found in the formal and forbidding dinner.

The English have not the art or the nature of meeting each other naturally, and for the uppermost purpose of social enjoyment; and so they make the dinner, which ought to be a mere method and medium of bringing them together, the great and overwhelming object, to which all true intercourse is sacrificed.(462)

Dinner partakes of the same artificiality which was attributed to taste and society. Hawthorne scarcely reached the point of sophistication which one must attain in order to enjoy an English dinner. "I have no pleasure in anything—a cigar excepted. Even liquor does not enliven me; so I very seldom drink any, except at some of these stupid English dinners."<sup>81</sup>

By 1853, the novelist had arrived at a more balanced and perhaps more penetrating analysis of the English character.

Nobody but an Englishman, it seems to me, has just this kind of vanity,—a feeling mixed up with scorn and good-nature; self-complacency on his own merits, and as an Englishman; pride at being in foreign parts; contempt for everybody around him; a rough kindness towards people in general.(463)

Still, the attraction-repulsion inner conflict remained substantially unaltered. In a letter to Fields, the novelist succeeds in clarifying his personal feeling toward the English.

The monstrosity of their self-conceit is such that anything short of unlimited admiration impresses them as malicious caricature. But they do me a great injustice in supposing that I hate them. I would as soon hate my own people.<sup>82</sup>

As late as 1863, the familiar jibes at England's dull, bullying, and belligerent nature continued to be expressed. "It is very singular how kind an Englishman will almost invariably be to an

<sup>81</sup>Caroline Ticknor, Hawthorne and His Publisher, p. 162.

<sup>82</sup>James T. Fields, Yesterday with Authors, p. 111.

individual American, without ever bating a jot of his prejudice against the American character in the lump."(464) "If you make an Englishman smart (unless he be a very exceptional one, of whom I have seen a few), you make him a monster; his best aspect is that of a ponderous respectability."(465) "In fact, in a good-natured way, John Bull is always doubling his fist in a stranger's face, and though it be good natured, it does not always produce the most amiable feeling."(466) Since Hawthorne repeatedly censured the English, even though he had come to admire them, it may be assumed that his lengthy period of observation provided a justification for what were felt to be indisputable points of criticism. Unfortunately, the interpretation of a national nature, especially a foreign one, tends to evoke an endless succession of generalities. Many of the reactions which Hawthorne expressed had been voiced by other visitors to England, and would continue to be voiced for many generations to come.

"In fact, nobody need fear to hold out half a crown to any person with whom he has occasion to speak a word in England."(467) The English were reprimanded for what was felt to be a blatant materialism. They were delicately taunted for the superficiality of their favorite social institution. "It has often perplexed me to imagine how an Englishman will be able to reconcile himself to any future state of existence from which the earthly institution of dinner shall be excluded."(468) Finally, English womanhood receives her final insult.

I desire above all things to be courteous; but, since the plain truth must be told, the soil and climate of England produce

feminine beauty as rarely as they do delicate fruit; and though admirable specimens of both are to be met with, they are the hot-house ameliorations of refined society, and apt, moreover, to elapse into the coarseness of the original stock.(469)

England's gentle sex failed to inspire praise, and there is little doubt that it was closely scrutinized. Hawthorne took a constant delight in exercising the male prerogative—discerning and judging feminine beauty. Should a comely maiden fall beneath his gaze, he was not loath to admit her excellence.

At long last, the English nature came to be admired.

When an Englishman is a gentleman, to be sure, it is as deep in him as the marrow of his bones, and the deeper you know him, the more you are aware of it, and that generation after generation has contributed to develop and perfect these unpretending manners, which, at first, may have failed to impress you, under his plain, almost homely exterior.(470)

Unrestricted praise for the English character seldom flowed from the novelist's pen—in truth, it was not Hawthorne's wont to extol anyone, mothers and beautiful maidens excepted. For the most part, the writer proceeds by pointing out the flaws in humanity's armor. The less harshly a person is criticized, the better he is assumed to be. When a person or group is commended, it is quite certain that praise is warranted. "What other men ever got so much out of life as the polished and wealthy Englishman of to-day?"(471) A note of envy may be detected in Hawthorne's lauding of the English gentlemen. Yet however much he might come to admire and envy the English, prejudice persisted in breaking through.

"The conflict that raged within him between the love of the beauties of an old aristocracy and the devotion to the ideals of

young democracy preoccupied him during his last years.<sup>83</sup> Hawthorne, in his steadfast loyalty to America, saw England with a biased eye. Paradoxically, in light of his criticism of the English people, he searched England's graveyards in the hope of discovering his ancestral name adorning some moss-grown tombstone. Hawthorne longed for English ties. The vacillation between Anglophobia and Anglomania might well be identified with a more basic conflict—one between aristocratic and democratic components of Hawthorne's own nature. Theoretically, he was a thoroughgoing democrat. Aesthetically and emotionally, Hawthorne had aristocratic hankерings which were not easily dismissed.

#### The Scots

A single profound observation on the nature of the Scots barely succeeds in fully characterizing the people. "The Scotch seem to me to get drunk at very unseasonable hours." (472) It is interesting to note an attempt at lightness, especially when it falls within the inordinately heavy pattern in which the novelist usually wrote. Hawthornian humor is rarely if ever funny in a pure sense; frequently it cloaks a veiled moralism. Almost invariably it seems to be a grim laughing at human foibles—not out of malicious pleasure, not always for edification, but simply because they do exist.

#### The French

France proved itself a disappointment. The climate, the filth, and the rapid-speaking Frenchmen were disconcerting. Hawthorne had

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<sup>83</sup>Schneider, The History of American Philosophy, p. 142.

naively hoped to converse with the Frenchmen in their own tongue—French was the one foreign language which he could read with skill—but he soon realized that this was not to be. He never tapped the spirit of France; he did not claim to understand her people.

"But a Frenchman is as different from a German, as quicksilver from lead. It is impossible to make a machine of him." (473) If Hawthorne knew the French nature but poorly, he knew the German not at all. The abundance of art pieces which France had to offer was somewhat intriguing. "Truly, I have no sympathies towards the French people; their eyes do not win mine, nor do their glances melt and mingle with mine. But they do grand and beautiful things in the architectural way; and I am grateful for it." (474) Finally, the Frenchman's nature is elevated far above that of the drab Englishman. "Every Frenchman is probably more of an artist than one Englishman in a thousand." (475) The best that may be said for the sparse commentary on the French nature is that it is well-phrased; at its worst it is trivial, prejudiced, and extremely cursory.

#### The Italians

"It is very singular, the sad embrace with which Rome takes possession of the soul." (476) ("Side by side with the massiveness of the Roman Past, all matters that we handle or dream of nowadays look evanescent and visionary alike." (477)) Hawthorne entered imperfectly into the spirit of Italy. He came to but a partial understanding of the Italian nature. For the most part, the commentary on Italy is concerned with art objects and places of interest rather than with the

people themselves. Then too, Hawthorne's knowledge of Italy was limited to a sort of vague feeling which was itself incapable of being succinctly formulated. It is indeed difficult for a traveler in a foreign land to comprehend with any certainty the inner constitution of his host peoples. At best, he may hope for the establishment of a sympathetic bond between himself and the strangers about him.

Especially is this true when a person travels late in life, long after the characteristics of his own national nature have firmly settled in his being. However much the mature voyager may desire entrance into the hearts of a foreign people, he remains, through the solidity of his past experience, a stranger.

In light of the superficial but bulky barrier separating an observer from the nature under surveillance—regardless of the individual's length of contact with that nature—it is remarkable that one manages to characterize a nation to any true depth. Hawthorne succeeded in one or two instances. He became aware, for example, of the discrepancy between American and Italian philanthropy.

(An Italian, indeed, seldom dreams of being philanthropic, except in bestowing alms among the paupers, who appeal to his beneficence at every step; nor does it occur to him that there are fitter modes of propitiating Heaven than by penances, pilgrimages, and offerings at shrines. Perhaps, too, their system has its share of moral advantages; they, at all events, cannot well pride themselves, as our own more energetic benevolence is apt to do, upon sharing in the counsels of Providence and kindly helping out its otherwise impracticable designs.(478))

Perhaps the one most piercing observation deals with the fact that falsehood seems quite native to an Italian.

(But Italian asseverations of any questionable fact, however true they may chance to be, have no witness of their truth in the

faces of those who utter them. Their words are spoken with strange earnestness, and yet do not vouch for themselves as coming from any depth, like roots drawn out of the substance of the soul, with some of the soil clinging to them. There is always a something inscrutable, instead of frankness, in their eyes. In short, they lie so much like truth, and speak truth so much as if they were telling a lie, that their auditor suspects himself in the wrong, whether he believes or disbelieves them; it being the one thing certain, that falsehood is seldom an intolerable burden in the tenderest of Italian consciences.(479))

Any attempt to characterize a people on the basis of their uniqueness is doomed to failure. Since human nature is everywhere alike at all times, those remarks which would establish subtle distinctions between various peoples are as disputable as a boundary line itself. National natures are invariably depicted in terms of differences, but the basic similarities which underlie these surface lineaments are infinitely more significant. The life pattern of which Hawthorne wrote applied to all mankind. The national traits granted to various peoples belong to a different and lesser level of thought. Although the novelist succeeds reasonably well in making distinctions on a national basis, he evidences a proficient talent rather than a profound one. He displays his mind at work on a more prosaic level—on a level where many other writers, Irving, Emerson, and Henry James among them, have equaled or surpassed him. Even when he turned from foreign shores to his native land, Hawthorne's ability to characterize on a national basis was not commensurate with his other talents.

#### The Americans

There can be little doubt that Hawthorne held a limited understanding of his own nation. Even though he was proud of America at large—both in the principles which prescribed its way of life, and

in their less perfect social and political actualization—he was a regionalist in his thinking. The United States was too unlimited a piece of territory for one person to embrace. Hawthorne felt that the nation and the people had no true unity, and that sovereignty rightly belonged to the individual state or region. America's vastness, in which Walt Whitman found one heartbeat, abashed and confused Hawthorne.

The writer's early observations on America sparkle with a strong flow of pride in that moral strength which was capable of absorbing and correcting the entering gush of foreign humanity.

It was cheering, also, to reflect, that nothing short of settled depravity could resist the strength of moral influences, diffused throughout our native land;—that the stock of home-bred virtue is large enough to absorb and neutralize so much of foreign vice;—and that the outcasts of Europe, if not by their own choice, yet by an almost inevitable necessity, promote the welfare of the country that receives them to its bosom. (480)

America is a land in which workable political ideals spring from a solid, utilitarian morality. On other occasions, a perverted patriotism was capable of provoking an aristocratic and bigoted declaration against foreigners. "Nothing is so absolutely abominable as the sense of freedom and equality, pertaining to an American, grafted on the mind of a native of any other country in the world. I do HATE a naturalized citizen; nobody has a right to our ideas, unless born to them." (481) There are portentous indications that Hawthorne was something of an "American Firster." He seldom leaped to the defense of racial or religious minority groups. Notwithstanding the democratic principles to which he pledged himself, a strange form of aristocratic prejudice continuously made itself known.

"We Americans are the best people in the world,—but it is a poor world at that."(482) There was no delusion that America had achieved a Utopia with her form of government, but merely that she excelled when compared with other nations. Hawthorne did not believe, along with Emerson and Whitman, that America was destined to go on to greater and greater heights. He foresaw that this nation, like all others which history has recorded, would reach a climax and an inevitable decline. Perhaps he feared that America would fall into decadence before she had realized her fullest potential. There was no denying that America was yet in a state of rawness—that her people were not yet fastened to her soil. "Oh, that we could have ivy in America! What is there to beautify us, when our time of ruin comes."(483)

Regionalism, accentuated by prospects of a civil war, became a favorite theme.

I wonder that we Americans love our country at all, it having no limits and no oneness; and when you try to make it a matter of the heart, everything falls away except one's native State; neither can you seize hold of that unless you tear it out of the Union, bleeding and quivering.(484)

In 1861, Hawthorne wrote his publisher, Ticknor, the supreme expression of his regionalistic sentiment. "Perhaps, however, I shall have a new Romance ready, by the time New England becomes a separate nation—a consummation I rather hope for than otherwise."<sup>84</sup> In the same year, Hawthorne informed Horatio Bridge of the delight which he felt in the dissolution of the Union. "Whatever happens next, I must say that I rejoice that the old Union is smashed. We never were one people, and

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<sup>84</sup>Caroline Ticknor, Hawthorne and His Publisher, p. 256.

never really had a country since the Constitution was formed."<sup>85</sup> The Civil War was interpreted as a natural occurrence in a country which had tried to form a union of heterogeneous regions. Although he was a loyal New Englander, Hawthorne respected the sovereign power of the several states beyond his region.

In the vast extent of our country,—too vast by far to be taken into one small human heart,—we inevitably limit to our State, or, at farthest, to our own section, that sentiment of physical love for the soil which renders an Englishman, for example, so intensely sensitive to the dignity and well-being of his little island, that one hostile foot, treading anywhere upon it, would make a bruise on each individual breast. If a man loves his own State, therefore, and is content to be ruined with her, let us shoot him, if we can, but allow him an honorable burial in the soil he fights for.(485)

Freedoms which this country had come to take for granted were pointed to with pride. "But with whom is an American citizen entitled to take a liberty, if not with his own chief magistrate?"(486) At the same time that the excellences of the American system were called to the front, its deficiencies did not go unnoticed. "There never existed any other government against which treason was so easy, and could defend itself by such plausible arguments, as against that of the United States."(487) In spite of the numerous weaknesses which democracy might have, Hawthorne preferred it to all other forms of government.

The unthinking patriotism of earlier years was strongly modified by the unnatural adoption of a cosmopolitan attitude. In coming to admire England, Hawthorne became increasingly aware of

<sup>85</sup>Horatio Bridge, Personal Recollections, p. 169.

America's crudeness. He derided, with some justification, the American travelers with whom he was thrown in contact. "An American, be it said, seldom turns his best side outermost abroad; and an observer, who has had much opportunity of seeing the figure which they make, in a foreign country, does not so much wonder that there should be a severe criticism on their manners as a people."(488) In a letter to Ticknor, the pseudo-sophisticated, European attitude is more pronounced. "I wish I were a little more patriotic; but to confess the truth I had rather be a sojourner to any other country than return to my own. The United States are fit for many excellent purposes, but they certainly are not fit to live in."<sup>86</sup> By 1859, Hawthorne had been so long in England that a strange cosmopolitan dye had begun to color what were essentially provincial fibers.

From an American's viewpoint, a severely strained relationship exists between himself and the Englishman. "Nevertheless, it is undeniable that an American is continually thrown upon his national antagonism by some acrid quality in the moral atmosphere of England."(489) "An American is not very apt to love the English people, as a whole, on whatever length of acquaintance."(490) Hawthorne held a low opinion of the general populace of any nation—America included. America's want of a cultural heritage had a chastening effect, and the realization that America must still turn to England for elegance in art was sorely lamented. "But, alas! our philosophers have not yet taught us what is best, nor have our poets

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<sup>86</sup>Caroline Ticknor, Hawthorne and His Publisher, p. 214.

sung us what is beautifulst, in the kind of life that we must lead; and therefore we still read the old English wisdom, and harp upon the ancient strings." (491) Hawthorne felt the need for a strong native voice in America. Perhaps he would have agreed with Emerson in demanding the appearance of a Walt Whitman on the American scene.

At times, Hawthorne evidenced a sheer apathy for national concerns. This lack of interest in national affairs may have stemmed from a deeply set provincialism.<sup>87</sup> More probably, it should be credited to subtler origins. Nations are destined to evolve, under providential guidance, at a slow and steady rate which mortal man may neither lessen nor accelerate. Then too, national natures and nations themselves are of relatively minor importance in that they exist as entities only in terms of distinctions which have no internal or spiritual depth. Though Hawthorne, as a traveler, was almost forced to recognize national natures, and though he recorded them with an almost mechanical skill, his heart was not in the matter; for Hawthorne's principal concerns had charted a different and deeper course. While man the national being was of some interest, the individual man—in his relationship to himself, his society, and his God—proved a much more intriguing subject.

#### The Puritans

One group of peoples, distinguished by religious rather than

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<sup>87</sup>Henry James, Hawthorne (London, 1879). James' biography advances the notion that Hawthorne was essentially provincial in his outlook.

national boundaries, seemingly elicited a sympathetic response from Hawthorne. The Puritan era was one of substance and solidity.

It was an age when what we call talent had far less consideration than now, but the massive materials which produce stability and dignity of character a great deal more. The people possessed, by hereditary right, the quality of reverence; which, in their descendants, if it survive at all, exists in smaller proportion, and with a vastly diminished force, in the selection and estimate of public men. The change may be for good or evil, and is partly, perhaps, for both.(492)

Puritanism helped to set the tone for America. The bustling energy of the Puritan in war and commerce prepared the way for Benjamin Franklin and the American ideal of success. Yet beneath the external vigor of the Puritan fathers there abided a settled morality founded upon a grim recognition of life's harshness.<sup>88</sup> "Their immediate posterity, the generation next to the early emigrants, wore the blackest shade of Puritanism, and so darkened the national visage with it, that all subsequent years have not sufficed to clear it up. We have yet to learn again the forgotten art of gayety."(493)

Despite their sternness, the Puritans were quite human at heart.

Had they followed their hereditary taste, the New England settlers would have illustrated all events of public importance by bonfires, banquets, pageantries and processions. Nor would it have been impracticable, in the observance of majestic ceremonies, to combine mirthful recreation with solemnity, and give, as it were, a grotesque and brilliant embroidery to the great robe of state, which a nation, at such festivals, puts on.(494)

"But it is an error to suppose that our grave forefathers--though accustomed to speak and think of human existence as a state merely of

<sup>88</sup>Perry Miller, The New England Mind, p. 37.

trial and warfare, and though unfeignedly prepared to sacrifice goods and life at the behest of duty—made it a matter of conscience to reject such means of comfort, or even luxury, as lay fairly within their grasp." (495) In religion, however, the Puritans displayed a strength—which Hawthorne admired—in their preference for an austere simplicity. "The Puritans showed their strength of mind and heart, by preferring a sermon of an hour and a half long, into which the preacher put his whole soul and spirit, and lopping away all these externals, into which religious life had first gushed and flowered, and then petrified." (496) If a people may be elevated above the rest of humanity on the basis of outer or apparent characteristics of their group, the Puritans deserve such elevation. But in terms of human nature, the Puritans are seen to be susceptible to those same failings which have kept man a constant companionship whenever he might congregate.

A few scattered reflections nowise represent the true nature of the Puritan people. Since the novelist had personified the very spirit of Puritanism in his art, there was little need for his reflecting on concepts so richly and fully presented in fiction. It is quite evident, moreover, that Hawthorne respected the Puritans. In their moral fixedness he discovered a strength for dealing directly with life rarely equaled in other peoples.

#### New England

However well Hawthorne may have understood his ancestral land, his observations on the New England people are quite shallow. "The

New-Englanders, as a people, are not apt to retain a revengeful sense of injury, and nowhere, perhaps, could a politician, however odious in his power, live more peacefully in his nakedness and disgrace."(497) A love for New England is obvious, but the reasons behind that love are not clearly given. "New England is quite as large a lump of earth as my heart can really take in."(498) Normally, the reflections on New England's quality are in a general and rather traditional manner. "When a Yankee is coarse he is pretty sure to be vulgar too."(499) "Yet there would be a less striking contrast between Southern and New-England villages, if the former were as much in the habit of using white paint as we are. It is prodigiously efficacious in putting a bright face upon a bad matter."(500)

#### Similarity of Natures

Whatever Hawthorne purported to write about, he was of necessity writing within the framework of his personal philosophy. An attempt at characterizing national natures was accordingly doomed to failure. In truth, in light of the Hawthornian philosophy, a fundamental and final recognition in regard to all national natures was necessary. "Indeed, I doubt whether there be anything really worth recording in the little distinctions between one nation and another; at any rate, after the first novelty is over, new things seem equally commonplace with the old."(501)

All in all, the commentary on national natures is almost wholly destitute of ideas. This is not to say that it is without value, or that Hawthorne is any less successful than many another

writer in portraying national character. Indeed, the observations are significant in that they present a contrast to the more abstract workings of the Hawthorne mind. They show, also, the limitations which provincialism and prejudice may impose. They delicately hint at Hawthorne's aristocratic hankerings. Finally, they convey the fact that Hawthorne could be quite like other writers at times, no better or no worse, in skillfully presenting surface distinctions. While the depiction of national natures is not unsuccessful, it stands primarily as an interesting contrast to the more meaningful conception of human nature rather than as a vital portion of the Hawthornian thought pattern.

## CHAPTER X

### PROGRESS, REFORM, BROTHERHOOD, AND WAR

When the dominant concepts which Hawthorne's observations illustrate are considered as a unit--that is, the life compound into which man is born, the immitigable forces playing upon him, and his own imperfect nature--the novelist's conclusions regarding the limitations or possibilities of mortal life are more readily understood. "Realities" present before birth--sin, providence, the physical compound--combine with perpetually functioning religious, social, and domestic forces to fix the course of mankind within a binding pattern. Hawthorne's opinion in the various thought fields--which constitutes his personal philosophy--foreordains and necessitates whatever theorizing he may offer concerning the possible attainments of earthly life. The Hawthornian speculation on these attainments and on the limitations which determine them tends to crystallize his philosophy.

Though the observations on each constituent element of the thought pattern are conclusions of a sort in that they clearly define Hawthorne's orientation to that specific subject, and though they are mutually dependent rather than exclusive, the meditative commentary on progress, reform, brotherhood, and war brings the seemingly divergent phases of thought into their sharpest single focus. The exposition on these topics may be understood only in terms of the pattern as it has

been developed to this point. Once that pattern is accepted, Hawthorne's statements appear both natural and inevitable.

## 1

## PROGRESS

The word "progress" evokes a variety of responses. It may call to mind the bettering of man's physical environment—more abundant food, shelter, and clothing, a greater choice of conveniences, a longer life span—in truth, all of the visible and measurable improvements which man's mind has effected since the beginning of time. Second, progress may be thought of in terms of man himself: the men of the present are intrinsically superior as moral beings to the men of the past. Both man's physical welfare and his own nature are moving toward perfection. Too often, progress as measured in terms of a physical advancement is confused with a true or spiritual progress of humanity. If man now leads a longer and more refined life—one clustered with material conveniences—it is assumed that he leads a better one. Hawthorne was not confused on this score, for he refused to associate the material with the spiritual. In conformity with his expressed views on sin and human nature, he could not believe in a true progress—that man himself and the "realities" with which man must contend were anywise improving.

In 1836, Hawthorne held faith in progress in the first sense; the popularly accepted one. "It is not, we hope, irreverent to say, that the Creator gave us our world, in a certain sense, unfinished, and left it to the ingenuity of man to bring it to the highest

perfection of which final and physical things are susceptible."(502) Material progress is possible, but the perfectibility of mortal life lies beyond man's meager ability. Man, as the instigator of his own advancement, betters his worldly lot and thereby creates a form of progress. This does not imply that human nature is as easily mended. It was not long, moreover, before Hawthorne was to lose his faith in the possibilities of material progress.

"Rest, rest, thou weary world! for to-morrow's round of toil and pleasure will be as wearisome as to-day's has been; yet both shall bear thee onward a day's march of eternity."(503) Man's world is moving forward quite gradually; each new day is better than its predecessor in that it adds its bit to the total heap of material progress. Advancements are so slow/~~in~~ coming that they may not be measured by the individual eye. "Thus gradually, by silent and steady influences, are great changes wrought."(504) Perhaps in a lifetime a man may observe no change, yet a steady and supposedly forward evolution of life is insisted upon. The error lies in anticipating that any one man or any one age may either effect or witness a wholesale repatching of life's fabric.

Material progress, frequently identified with true advancement, carries with it a compensatory evil. "It is a great revolution in social and domestic life, and no less so in the life of a secluded student, this almost universal exchange of the open fireplace for the cheerless and ungenial stove."(505) "In one way or another, here and there and all around us, the inventions of mankind are fast blotting

the picturesque, the poetic, and the beautiful out of human life."(506) A stove, taken as a symbol of materialistic and utilitarian values, crassly replaces that which may be more aesthetically satisfying. The loss of the fireplace might well be interpreted by a romantic or sensitive person as a destruction of the beautiful. Each new item, as a part of the total scheme of progress, replaces an older item which, despite its lack of utilitarian merit, may have a greater intrinsic value from a spiritual viewpoint. Inventions, mechanical improvements, often offend aesthetic sensibilities by their very coarseness and newness.

Each age, in spite of the debased qualities which it may evidence, has a right to a niche in the eventful stream of progress. Hawthorne had come to think of progress as consisting of mere "difference" rather than "improvement." Within this special interpretation of the word, each age progresses beyond the preceding one in that it develops contrary characteristics. The fact that the newer age may be more sordid in many respects does not signify that progress has not taken place. "The earnest life of to-day, however petty and homely it may be, has a right to its place alongside of what is left of the life of other days; and if it be vulgar itself, it does not vulgarize the scene."(507)

The heart, Hawthorne's favorite medium, provides the only entrance into spiritual truths. Since its message is constant for all men at all times, it acts as an agent of conservatism. Man's intellect, linked with coldness and pride, is extremely erratic and

imperfect in that it may lead him in devious directions. The operation of the mind, since it has no claim on spirituality, cannot have stability.

If mankind were all intellect, they would be continually changing, so that one age would be entirely unlike another. The great conservative is the heart, which remains the same in all ages; so that common-places of a thousand years' standing are as effective as ever.(508)

Hawthorne, by 1855, had grown fond of making the rather conventional past-present comparison. If this tendency may be taken as a mark of increasing age and conservatism, it may equally well be interpreted as a longer and wiser look at time's total program.

It takes down one's overweening opinion of the present time, to see how many kinds of beauty and magnificence have heretofore existed, and are now quite past away and forgotten; and to find that we—who suppose that, in all matters of taste, our age is the very flower-season of time—that we are poor and meagre as to many things in which they were rich. There is nothing gorgeous now. We live a very naked life.(509)

The question is whether or not there has been any progress at all. Is it not true that other ages have reached greater heights than the present one is capable of achieving? Modern life, which appeared to Hawthorne as overly mechanized, led him to lament the decrease in beauty which seemed inevitably to follow the wake of mechanical progress.

"Thought grows mouldy. What was good and nourishing food for the spirits of one generation affords no sustenance for the next."(510) The necessity for moving onward, the need for a continual adoption of the new and discarding of the old is undeniable. Each age has a peculiar temper, and if it is to succeed in being itself it must cast

off outmoded paraphernalia of the past. Man must maintain a steady and incessantly changing forward motion without once glancing back. Failure to move, to change, to march into new and different regions, invites stagnation and decay. In many ways, the concept of progress necessitates self-deception on humanity's part. It is demanded of man that he participate in the illusion of progress, just as it is demanded that he participate in the artificiality of society. But it is not necessary that he blind himself to the actual nature of those forces of which he is a captive.

"We soon perceive that the present day does not engross all the taste and ingenuity that has ever existed in the mind of man; that, in fact, we are a barren age in that respect."(511) In returning to the then-and-now theme, Hawthorne elaborates the conviction that his age is a particularly arid one--that it lacks the rich and lavish qualities of past times. "The world has ceased to be so magnificent as it once was."(512) Yet in the same breath with which he affirms a lack of actual improvement in life, the novelist presents his supreme message of progress.

The moral, if any moral were to be gathered from these petty and wretched circumstances, was, "Let the past alone: do not seek to renew it; press on to higher and better things,—at all events, to other things; and be assured that the right way can never be that which leads you back to the identical shapes that you long ago left behind. Onward, onward, onward!"(513)

It is required that the new should replace the old. There is no insistence that the new be superior to the old, but merely that an onward movement is mandatory. It is obligatory for man to keep moving, to delude himself that he is improving. Above all is newness

indispensable if the individual is to escape being stifled by tradition which passes on the evil of past societies while losing the good in transit.

The cardinal purpose of contemporary mankind, as Hawthorne saw it, was the furthering of a false scheme of progress.

[It is the iron rule in our day to require an object and purpose in life. It makes us all parts of a complicated scheme of progress, which can only result in our arrival at a colder and drearier region than we were born in. It insists upon everybody's adding somewhat—a mite, perhaps, but earned by incessant effort—to an accumulated pile of usefulness, of which the only use will be, to burden our posterity with even heavier thoughts and more inordinate labor than our own. No life now wanders like an unfettered stream; there is a mill-wheel for the tiniest rivulet to turn. We go all wrong, by too strenuous a resolution to go all right.(514)]

Man has lost his sense of values in an egotistical effort to push ahead at all cost. Apparent progression is often an actual decadence in that it is merely the heaping up of new and different rubbish. Indeed, it matters but little in the long look whether a man shall contend for or against progress; for all efforts at interfering with matters beyond mortal control are ineffectual.

In one instance, Hawthorne poses—in terms of the physical conditions of an individual life—his recurring distinction between actual and apparent progress.

Republican as I am, I should still love to think that noblemen lead noble lives, and that all this stately and beautiful environment may serve to elevate them a little way above the rest of us. If it fail to do so, the disgrace falls equally upon the whole race of mortals as on themselves; because it proves that no more favorable conditions of existence would eradicate our vices and weaknesses. How sad, if this be so!(515)

A favorable natural environment does not always create a better man.

The whole issue of progress is clouded with deceptions; for mankind is prone to accept materialistic betterings as true progress, while failing at the same time to consider the moral aspects of the problem. Were all mankind somehow granted the luxurious comforts which a nobleman may enjoy, there is no reason to believe that the intractable quality of human nature would be substantially modified. To the contrary, this external rectification might well introduce compensatory evils more dreadful than the ones it has replaced.

"As regards its minor tastes, the world changes, but does not improve; it appears to me, indeed, that there have been epochs of far more exquisite fancy than the present one, in matters of personal ornament, and such delicate trifles as we put upon a drawing-room table, a mantel-piece, or a what-not." (516) Repeatedly, Hawthorne claims that progress consists of change rather than improvement. Each bit of material gain which mankind garners unto himself may well be balanced by a corresponding loss in spiritual values. "Nevertheless, the world and individuals flourish upon a constant succession of blunders." (517) Progress--when it comes at all--seldom follows the designed schemes of mere mortals; it is fortuitous. Man is scarcely capable of conceiving an aim and carrying it through to success. Providence takes pleasure in disrupting just such a project. Yet, somehow the world moves onward.

In his most openly conservative statement, Hawthorne admits that the dream of progress provides him little personal satisfaction. "Everybody can appreciate the advantages of going ahead; it might be

well, sometimes, to think whether there is not a word or two to be said in favor of standing still or going to sleep."(518) In a letter to Longfellow, the conservative viewpoint is made doubly clear. "I have had enough of progress. Now I want to stand stock still, or rather to go back twenty years or so; and that is what I seem to have done in coming to England."<sup>89</sup> Hawthorne never truly maintained faith in progress. He could not see that human nature had improved, or that it showed any indication of future improvement; he did, however, cherish an abstract hope that improvement might someday come.

Actually, all men and all ages have been very much alike, and were it not for man's need for diversity, he might enjoy himself equally well by standing still.

Late in life, Hawthorne voiced the expectation that humanity might be gradually evolving toward a basic simplicity, which suggests in turn a movement toward the heart—for the two are invariably linked in Hawthorne's thought. "Those words, 'genteel' and 'ladylike,' are terrible ones, and do us infinite mischief, but it is because (at least, I hope so) we are in a transition state, and shall emerge into a higher mode of simplicity than has ever been known to past ages."(519) Perhaps man is on the move away from an artificial order of life and into a more spiritual one, but as yet there are no manifest indications that this is the case.

Hawthorne had returned shortly before his death to a faith in

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<sup>89</sup>Samuel Longfellow, Life of N. W. Longfellow, II, 275.

progress vastly different from the one he had held in 1836.

Rather than such monotony of sluggish ages, loitering on a village-green, toiling in hereditary fields, listening to the parson's drone lengthened through centuries in the gray Norman church, let us welcome whatever change may come,—change of place, social customs, political institutions, modes of worship,—trusting that, if all present things shall vanish, they will but make room for better systems, and for a higher type of man to clothe his life in them, and fling them off in turn. (520)

It is not so much that God gave man a world to perfect, but merely that man must keep moving about in that world. When man progresses, he must act on the assumption that the new is better than the old. Although such faith will not always be justified, the necessity of movement and difference, the necessity of escape from the moldy weight of the past, mandates an effort in its behalf.

Hawthorne's conception of "reality" forbade an optimistic belief in the perfectibility of mortal life. "He was too much of a realist to change fashion in creeds. Time, experience—he is always remembering—have created men as we find them, and very likely only time and experience can make them over into something different."<sup>90</sup> Indeed, the period of time in which a man lives is not necessarily superior to a given past moment in history. Still, the Hawthornian message is not one of retrogression. It does not propose that a man should content himself with reveling in the glory of antique days. It insists, instead, on the absolute necessity of forward movement. It warns that change is the most that can be expected in the way of progress, and that all changes are not for the better. Nevertheless,

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<sup>90</sup>Parrington, Main Currents, II, 442.

man must continue his grandiose attempt at improvement. Finally, Hawthorne laments the shortsighted association of material progress with actual progress, for in this confused identification man deludes no one but himself. By neglecting the spiritual aspects of progress, man is apt to arrive in a region more doleful than that from which he came.

## 2

## REFORM

Hawthorne was not easily swept off his feet; he was not one to rebound to the bugle call nor follow the banner of zealous reformers. Active participation in reform movements never tempted him, for he was essentially a contemplative man. Some people, sensible ones at that, shrink from any attempted meddling with life's well set balance, for they fear that such experimentation frequently brings about a greater destruction of good than suppression of evil. Hawthorne was suspicious of narrow men, of fanatics, with their long petitions and unique schemes for salving the world's sore spots. The naivete of those men who proposed to erase the earth's blemishes with swift and sure strokes, who planned to change the life compound, both amused and frightened him.

Much of this disinterest in reform may be credited to a general lack of concern for the political activities of the day. "Nor does it follow that his skepticism toward reform resulted any more from apathy or a want of humanitarian impulses than from ignorance."<sup>91</sup> The daily

events of contemporary life were important to Hawthorne mainly as they symbolized ideas. Reform movements, as they developed, seemed overly concerned with rectifying the outer or phenomenal situation, while leaving the basic cause of the evil untouched—not that man was capable of changing that cause. Individual attempts at contending with providential forces were to be pitied in proportion to their sincerity. Reform, then, is a vain, confused, and misguided struggle of man's intellect to rectify conditions which are wholly beyond man's control.

"On the whole, I find myself rather more of an abolitionist in feeling than in principle." (521) Although Hawthorne was not a traitor to the Union cause, he could not keep from feeling that too much fuss was being made over a defect which only time could erase—in truth, he was not aroused by the slavery issue. The fervor with which his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Peabody, pushed the cause of the abolitionists proved a constant irritant. In commenting on the abolitionist cause, Hawthorne had written to Longfellow that "There are a hundred modes of philanthropy in which I could blaze with intenser zeal."<sup>92</sup> When Longfellow took up slavery as a theme, his novelist friend was not impressed with the poet's taste in subject matter. "I was never more surprised than at your writing poems about Slavery. I have not seen them, but have faith in their excellence; though I cannot conjecture

<sup>91</sup>Arlin Turner, "Hawthorne and Reform," New England Quarterly, XV (December 1942), 702.

<sup>92</sup>Samuel Longfellow, Life of H. W. Longfellow, II, 208.

what species of excellence it will be. You have never poetized a practical subject hitherto."<sup>93</sup> Slavery was looked upon as an evil which was scarcely to be remedied by man's feeble efforts. In due time, when no longer useful, slavery would crumble beneath its own weight. But until then, it is not well for man to meddle in providential affairs.

One weakness in all reform movements appears in the narrowness of the reformer himself.

Then, again, though the heart be large, yet the mind is often of such moderate dimensions as to be exclusively filled up with one idea. When a good man has long devoted himself to a particular kind of beneficence—to one species of reform—he is apt to become narrowed into the limits of the path wherein he treads, and to fancy there is no other good to be done on earth but that selfsame good to which he has put his hand, and in the very mode that best suits his own conceptions.(522)

A fanatical and single-purposed reformer becomes so wrought up over the one that he fails to see the many. If a man would aim at true reform, he must listen to his heart and attempt a limitless good, rather than content himself with a special benefit. Reformers are to be identified with the man of purpose who, in sacrificing his whole to one aim, becomes a solitary and cold being. In effect, a reformer, in lifting up his banner, too frequently steps beyond the circle of humanity and thereby cuts himself off from those whom he would aid.

"But, alas! if reformers would understand the sphere in which their lot is cast they must cease to look through pictured windows.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., I, 450.

Yet they not only use this medium, but mistake it for the whitest sunshine."(523) A reformer seldom if ever looks upon "reality"; he contents himself with rearranging the surface manifestations of evil without disturbing its internal roots. He makes the same mistake as those men who would measure progress only in terms of tangibles. In light of the optimistic, perfectibilitarian, new-thoughtist, and reformist environment into which Hawthorne moved so warily, especially during his residence at Concord, he felt it necessary to reconsider what he believed, and to state in unmistakable terms how wrong the contemporary world was in his understanding.<sup>94</sup> Reformers, though they actually effect but little, work upon a dangerous delusion in assuming that a malleable world awaits their hand. "No sagacious man will long retain his sagacity, if he live exclusively among reformers and progressive people, without periodically returning into the settled system of things, to correct himself by a new observation from that old stand-point."(524)

If one evil is removed, another rapidly fills the vacancy. Any man-made dream of altering that which is by its very nature unalterable hastens toward failure.

There is no instance, in all history, of the human will and intellect having perfected any great moral reform by methods which it adapted to that end; but the progress of the world, at every step, leaves some evil or wrong on the path behind it, which the wisest of mankind, of their own set purpose, could never have found the way to rectify.(525)

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<sup>94</sup>Mark Van Doren, ed., The Best of Hawthorne (New York, 1951), p. 422.

Life's compound retains its original grayness in the face of man's most violent designs at renovation. It is for this reason that specific and partial reforms are better left undone. Since true reform appears highly improbable, man's insufficient exertions are apt to appreciably worsen the situation which he has chosen to remedy.

The idea of total reform or eradication strongly appealed to Hawthorne. "When we quit a house, we are expected to make it clean for the next occupant;—why ought we not to leave a clean world for the coming generation."(526) Ideally, each generation should be allowed to move forward unencumbered. Actually, however, this is not to be. Hawthorne feared the axe and crowbar of the reformer; he feared that well-intended renovations were not only ineffectual, but dangerous. "But the hand that renovates is always more sacrilegious than that which destroys."(527)

Although an over-all reformation of human nature would be welcomed, were it possible, specific crusades dealing only with the outer shadows of evil are ridiculous from the outset. "The temperance-reformers unquestionably derive their commission from the Divine Beneficence, but have never been taken fully into its counsels."(528) Hawthorne could find no justification for a genial optimism which would assume man to be perfectible. He found no comfort in the superficial and narrow projects of the reformers; in fact, he cringed from them. Reform can be effective only when it blots out the old evil; when it becomes eradication or purification rather than a mere rearranging. Only death, fire, and flood can work

such a miracle.

In view of so wretched a state of things, we accept the ancient Deluge not merely as an insulated phenomenon, but as a periodical necessity, and acknowledge that nothing less than such a general washing-day could suffice to cleanse the slovenly old world of its moral and material dirt.(529)

Hawthorne was scarcely warmed by the fiery spirit of reform which consumed the literary folk of New England. "Profoundly skeptical about all social reforms, convinced of the innate sinfulness of the human heart, he seems to regard almost any form of unusual ambition or achievement as a symptom of pride and lack of love."<sup>95</sup> It is not so much that man should remain passive, should dread action, but rather that he need awaken to the dangers involved when, in relying too heavily on his intellect, he oversteps mortal prerogatives.

Visionary delights, cloud wanderings, and a belief in man's perfectibility ran counter to the pattern which had grown rigid in Hawthorne's mind. "His amusement over the Brook Farm venture, his attitude toward slavery and the Civil War, and his 'laissez faire' theories in general, reveal him as a hardened realist."<sup>96</sup> It can be seriously doubted whether the schemes of reformers bring about anything worthwhile. Not only are the results of reform questioned, but the effort itself is looked upon askance. Hawthorne was suspicious of men with a devouring cause; he was distrustful of

<sup>95</sup>Henry Bamford Parkes, "Poe, Hawthorne, Melville: An Essay in Sociological Criticism," Partisan Review, XVI (February 1949), 161.

<sup>96</sup>Schneider, The Puritan Mind, p. 260.

visionaries and zealots; above all, he was skeptical of man's ability to alter life. He saw that sin had more permanence than those who would fight against it. He realized, too, that a superintending providence held firm control, and that to meddle with its ministrations was to invite disaster. Since Hawthorne did not believe in progress, it is unreasonable to request his trust in reform—which is itself but the ineffectual instrument of progress.

## 3

## BROTHERHOOD

Hawthorne's theory of brotherhood has caused much consternation. Biographers have pointed to it as evidence of optimism on the novelist's part. Though Hawthorne professed the principle of brotherhood, though he ranked it among the most praiseworthy of human appetites, he did not find the principle at work in the phenomenal world. Humanity is drawn together by the spiritual bond of the human heart. An intelligent humanity should acknowledge this brotherhood and act according to its dictates. Hawthorne intensely desired the consummation of this ideal. "And the truth which Hawthorne perceived perhaps more profoundly than any other was that of the brotherhood of man. By inheritance and training he tended toward exclusiveness; but both his heart and his intellect showed him the shallowness of such a scheme of existence."<sup>97</sup> Unfortunately unselfish examples of the doctrine of brotherhood in operation were rarely if ever observable in

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<sup>97</sup> Julian Hawthorne, "Hawthorne's Philosophy," Century, XXXII,  
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mortal life.

The feeling for brotherhood is intuitive. In essence, it is little different from man's desire for society. Unlike that desire, the appetite for brotherhood has not yet been surrendered to an artificial actualization. In truth, the principle is rarely acted upon at all. With the social appetite as a foundation, man, working through his intellect, constructs an artificial order. To the urge for brotherhood, which is closely allied with the social appetite, man pays little heed. Thus, while the principle of brotherhood has within it the force for an immeasurable good, man's nature denies that force an opportunity to prove its worth.

"Are there any two living creatures who have so few sympathies that they cannot possibly be friends?"(530) Concurrent with the sympathetic bond connecting all humanity, there is inherent in the very pattern of life a darker aspect of brotherhood.

Such thoughts sadden, yet satisfy my heart; for they teach me that the poor man in this mean, weather-beaten hovel, may call the rich his brother,—brethren by Sorrow, who must be an inmate of both their households,—brethren by Death, who will lead them both to other homes.(531)

In sin and sorrow, man encounters the most formidable levelers. There are no exceptions; all men—no matter what their talent, rank, or wealth—must, to a like degree, confront an inflexible life pattern which directs the course of man, and is, in return, nowise shaped by him. Religiously speaking, man is of a brotherhood in that he shall eventually dwell in a common spiritual realm no matter what his material worth and circumstance in the earthly one.

Hawthorne never hardened himself against the entreaties of his fellow men; he was a comparatively "easy touch" for beggars, or for anyone in distress. Contact with humanity—the warm feeling which one gets from aiding his fellow creatures—is assuredly worthwhile. "There is so much want and wretchedness in the world, that we may safely take the word of any mortal, when they say they need our assistance; and even should we be deceived, still the good to ourselves, resulting from a kind act, is worth more than the trifle by which we purchase it."(532)

But the true faculty of doing good consists not in wealth nor station, but in the energy and wisdom of a loving heart, that can sympathize with all mankind, and acknowledges a brother or a sister in every unfortunate man or woman, and an own child in each neglected orphan.(533)

Individual charity, individual contact, is preferable to the thin, cold efforts of organized groups. In an optimistic moment, Hawthorne points out the way to a good life. The acknowledgement of an abiding and binding brotherhood with one's fellow men—a declaration from the heart—stands as a starting point from which all manner of goodness may afterwards flow.

It is possible, of course, for a man to so live that he not only fails to advance, but somehow actually hinders, the onward course of events. Yet in a greater sense, few men succeed in eluding, even momentarily, the extensive ties of humanity. In his very existence, man is forced to work within humanity's circle and contribute, in spite of himself, to a form of progress. Each individual has an ordained function in this life. Whether or not he chooses to assume

the duties of that function, still he frequently contributes, notwithstanding his stubborn waywardness, to the progression of life. "How many who have deemed themselves antagonists will smile hereafter, when they look back upon the world's wide harvest field, and perceive that, in unconscious brotherhood, they were helping to bind the selfsame sheaf!"(534) All men are reduced to an equal status by the compound into which they are born. Distinctions formed upon material criteria are meaningless beside this solemn truth.

Dispositions more boldly speculative may derive a stern enjoyment from the discovery, since there must be evil in the world, that a high man is as likely to grasp his share of it as a low one. A wider scope of view, and a deeper insight, may see rank, dignity, and station, all proved illusory, so far as regards their claim to human reverence, and yet not feel as if the universe were thereby tumbled head-long into chaos.(535)

"What an intimate brotherhood is this in which we dwell, do what we may to put an artificial remoteness between the high creature and the low one!"(536) Human nature is invariable; life itself is equally constant. Only material absurdities separate man from man. "How superficial are the niceties of such as pretend to keep aloof! Let the whole world be cleansed, or not a man or woman of us all can be clean."(537) Go where he will, man is fastened in a kinship of imperfectibility to his fellow beings. Aristocracy, or any other apparent criterion of inequality, is but a fabrication of the intellect. Different and better physical conditions do not bring forth different and better men.

If man would but reject the materialistic set of values to which he now adheres, and take up spiritual ones, then might he come

into a lasting brotherhood. The fraternal bond exists, but it is continually denied, for man is not yet alive to its possibilities. He persists in working through his debased and magnificently imperfect intellect. Were he once to rely fully on the heart, then and only then could he expect a blossoming of brotherhood. Need for reform would be past. Then and only then, would progress, in a deeper sense, have taken place.

There may come a time, even in this world, when we shall all understand that our tendency to the individual appropriation of gold and broad acres, fine houses, and such good and beautiful things as are equally enjoyable by a multitude, is but a trait of imperfectly developed intelligence, like the simpleton's cupidity of a penny. When that day dawns,--and probably not till then,-- I imagine that there will be no more poor streets nor need of almshouses. (538)

Brotherhood, both as a principle and as an ideal, leaves little to be desired. Once put into effect, it might well prove itself a panacea for mankind's ills. The trouble is that humanity seems incapable of changing its ways. Instead of evidences of brotherhood, one sees everywhere its very antithesis. Hawthorne, when thinking on an abstract level, tends toward optimism. The principle of brotherhood, no matter how warmly the novelist advocates it, remains an abstract principle. When he stops to look about him, when he stops to study the scene from which all sound observations arise, brotherhood, however much man might need it, is no longer evident.

#### The Lack of Brotherhood

Since man is brutish in his desires, since sympathy is not present in his original nature, brotherhood, though noble in principle,

finds no actualization in life.

Most men—and certainly I could not always claim to be one of the exceptions—have a natural indifference, if not an absolutely hostile feeling toward those whom disease, or weakness, or calamity of any kind causes to falter and faint amid the rude jostle of our selfish existence. The education of Christianity, it is true, the sympathy of a like experience and the example of women, may soften, and, possibly, subvert this ugly characteristic of our sex; but it is originally there, and has likewise its analogy in the practice of our brute brethren, who hunt the sick or disabled member of the herd from among them, as an enemy. It is for this reason that the stricken deer goes apart, and the sick lion grimly withdraws himself into his den. Except in love, or the attachments of kindred, or other very long and habitual affection, we really have no tenderness.(539)

In truth, life's unfortunates are sometimes rewarded with abuse when aid is requested. Though the divine ministrations of woman may partially soften man's outer nature, his primal lusts remain latent and unmodified.

"I wonder how many people live and die in the workhouse, having no other home, because other people have a great deal more than home enough!"(540) Brotherhood depends on mutual aid, but man is inherently selfish and grasping. Thus, brotherhood gives way before man's unending sinfulness. Although brotherhood exists as a "reality" to Hawthorne in the sense that all of life's elements converge so as to level humanity into a oneness—still it does not exist as an observable fact, for the selfish and imperfect nature of man refuses noble principles an opportunity to operate.

Not only is man indifferent to the suffering of his fellow human beings, but he frequently delights in adding to the woes of those in distress. He takes a sadistic pride in his strange talent for being inhuman. "It was certainly one of those crises that show a man how few

real friends he has, and the tendency of mankind to stand aside, at least, and let a poor devil fight his own troubles, if not assist them in their attack." (51) Man's nature is unquestionably debased. Until it is radically amended, there can be no brotherhood. Since human nature has always been the same, since it evidences no trend toward improvement, brotherhood, though it exists as a noble appetite of immense potential, has faint substance as a discernible fact.

Hawthorne proposed the principle of brotherhood in all sincerity; he searched longingly for overt evidence that his desire had an earthly actuality. He was forced to conclude, however, that brotherhood belonged, as of his moment, to an abstract realm.

## 4

## WAR

It is ironical, perhaps, that a study of Hawthorne's ideas should begin with "sin" and end with "war." Yet, this seems to be the pattern. In lieu of the novelist's over-all concept of mortal life, war rather than peace provides a more fitting climax for his philosophy. Indeed, Hawthorne had little or nothing to remark on the subject of peace. Had he written upon it, doubtless he would have suggested that peace may come through a universal brotherhood, which comes, in turn, from listening to one's heart. Actually, peace remains a remotely distant possibility.

When the fractions of Hawthorne's thought are totalled, it is not surprising that war should, in keeping with that integration, appear inevitable. "It is the beauty of war, for men to commit mutual

havoc with undisturbed good-humor."(542) Man, since he will not accept his bonded brotherhood, since he remains greedy and vain, lives in a state of continuous struggle with his fellow beings. History is little more than a chronicling of ceaseless warfare.

It is a sad thought, that men of the sword, whether as individuals or in armies, should hitherto have filled so large space in the annals of every nation. Will the time never come, when all, that pertains to war, shall be merely a matter of antiquarian curiosity?(543)

There can be no end to war as long as human nature and the life pattern in which it is caught up continue unchanged.

Will the time ever come again, in America, when we may live half a score of years without once seeing the likeness of a soldier, except he be in the festal march of a company on its summer tour? Not in this generation, I fear, nor in the next, nor till the Millennium; and even that blessed epoch, as the prophecies seem to intimate, will advance to the sound of the trumpet.(544)

"There is no remoteness of life and thought, no hermetically sealed seclusion, except, possibly, that of the grave, into which the disturbing influences of this war do not penetrate."(545) Only death provides a final escape. Only partial exits from life's harshness--of which actual warfare is but an overt symbol--are open to man.

Primitive man was by nature vicious and bloodthirsty. Modern man, though he has refined his methods, retains the same primordial urges. "Set men face to face, with weapons in their hands, and they are as ready to slaughter one another now, after playing at peace and good-will for so many years, as in the rudest ages, that never heard of peace-societies, and thought no wine so delicious as what they quaffed from an enemy's skull."(546) Hawthorne would agree with

Thomas Hobbes' statement: "it cannot be denied but that the natural state of men, before they entered into society, was a mere war, and that not simply, but a war of all men against all men."<sup>98</sup> Hobbes, though a pessimist in regard to human nature, was quite complacent concerning the moral qualities of a political state; he felt that a state founded upon reason would control man's nature. Hawthorne did not believe that man was capable of ruling himself by reason, nor did he have faith that political and social institutions truly modify man's original nature. Though man's nature may be restrained by the social order or softened by the domestic one, it retains intact its native potential for evil.

War and its attendant glory are repugnant.

But, in truth, the whole system of a people crowing over its military triumphs had far better be dispensed with, both on account of the ill-blood that it helps to keep fermenting among nations, and because it operates as an accumulative inducement to future generations to aim at a kind of glory, the gain of which has generally proved more ruinous than its loss. I heartily wish that every trophy of victory might crumble away and that every reminiscence or tradition of a hero, from the beginning of the world to this day, could pass out of all men's memories at once and forever.(547)

Heroes, whom Hawthorne failed to appreciate in the manner of Emerson and Carlyle, may be viewed as symbols of man's decadence. Since war has neither victory nor end, man would be wiser if he would play down the memorials to his viciousness rather than glorying in them.

Hawthorne's conclusions on the possibilities for true progress, reform, brotherhood, and peace resemble ideas which Hobbes, Voltaire,

<sup>98</sup> Thomas Hobbes, The English Works of Thomas Hobbes, ed., Sir William Molesworth (London, 1841), II, 11.

or Swift might have expounded. Hawthorne differs from other gloomy prognosticators on man in that he would go beyond the limits of mortal life and propose a spiritual existence as compensation. He differs, too, in admitting a providential guidance—one which in its own due time salves the wounds of adversity.

In contrast to an apparent similarity with the thought of a select group of writers who saw life in somewhat the same tones, Hobbes, Voltaire, and Swift, the total Hawthornian pattern has a decided uniqueness. First of all, the nature of humanity is heavily clouded by a long standing propensity for evil. Second, life itself is rendered more odious by the harsh and rigid constitution of the physical compound in which man eternally dwells. Third, man has within him, normally in a weakened state, the instruments for his own improvement, but his nature forbids his relying on them. Fourth, there is a pervading morality which gives to all life a spiritual significance. Fifth, the spiritual life is taken on faith; it is elaborated but little, for it is assumed that the mortal life is of more immediate concern. There is no advice regarding the manner in which physical life should be led in order to obtain spiritual rewards. The emphasis is not on a good life, but rather on the nature of life itself. Sixth, in considering earthly life, Hawthorne constantly returns to sins, evils, blemishes, imperfections. Man is seen to be both vain and vicious in his original nature. Seventh, and last, Hawthorne proposes the obligation of living life, of living with blemishes—of accepting them—rather than blinking one's eyes at them.

He affirms the necessity of living within society and of contributing, in one's own way, to the progress of that society. While he severely criticizes the falseness of certain man-made institutions, he does not deny the necessity for their existence. He accepts life for what it is, and urges that man, within his own limitations, make the best of it.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE SYNTHESIS

In attempting to synthesize the thought pattern of a given individual it is necessary to introduce the emotional phase of his being; for, in truth, the distinction between so-called mental and emotional reactions is often an artificial one. The emotions of some individuals remain in subservience to a fixed mental orientation to life; this stability seems to have been true of Nathaniel Hawthorne. But a man is never pure mind. Even in the instance of those rare beings who attempt a mental regulation of their emotional life, certain temperamental oddities force their way into the pattern. Hawthorne, like most mortals, was possessed of prejudices and characteristic weaknesses, as well as more praiseworthy attributes. In short, his thought is limited by and intimately related to his uniqueness as an individual. A mere cold recording of the life details of a biographical subject fails to re-create a personality; neither will an exclusive study of a man's ideas evoke a warm-blooded image. It is well, therefore, to seek out a brief profile of Hawthorne as an emotional being in order that the workings of his mind may be better comprehended.

#### The Emotional Equation

Had Hawthorne followed the pattern established by his ancestors

he would probably have become a ship's captain. Neither his heredity nor his environment sufficiently account for his desire to write. Had the novelist absorbed and rephrased other men's ideas, his philosophy might well be understood in terms of its sources. Instead, the mature constitution of Hawthorne's total being defies an easy analysis. His early reading habits, home environment, and heredity undoubtedly explain the man in part, but they do not adequately explain him. A person with a keen and imaginative mind may formulate an original orientation to life. This is not to suggest that the problems Hawthorne reflected on were new problems, or that the answers he offered were new answers, but merely that they were the more or less unique answers of a distinct personality.

Hawthorne was essentially a man of slight emotional pressure. Since he acknowledged the nature of the life compound, he realized the futility of making eager demands upon it. His interest lay in thoughts--not in thinking upon the apparent surfaces of life, but in milling about among the deep and abiding currents of existence. Too often these thoughts came to him with a disturbing force all their own.

Lights and shadows are continually flitting across my inward sky, and I know neither whence they come nor whither they go; nor do I inquire too closely into them. It is dangerous to look too minutely at such phenomena. It is apt to create a substance, where at first there was a mere shadow. (548)

Repeatedly, Hawthorne refers, almost with pride, to his native aversion for labor. "Oh, belovedest, labor is the curse of the world, and nobody can meddle with it, without becoming proportionably brutified." (549) It is questionable whether the desire for complete

indolence was genuine or feigned. It is true that the time spent in unimaginative and aesthetically unsatisfying work—the kind Hawthorne was continually forced into for his livelihood—takes something out of a man. Especially is this true when the individual concerned is prodded by an artistic appetite for creating.

When plagued with difficulties, Hawthorne was capable of evidencing a temper shockingly in contrast to his traditional restraint. "Always when I flounder into the midst of a tract of bushes, which cross and intertwine themselves about my legs, and brush my face, and seize hold of my clothes with a multitudinous gripe—always, in such a difficulty, I feel as if it were almost as well to lie down and die in rage and despair, as to go one step further." (550) Notwithstanding an occasional flare-up, the essential disposition was a reserved one, though far from timorous. From college days onward, there was great difficulty in getting the writer to speak in public. "As might be expected, his themes and forensics were beautifully written, although the arguments in them are not always logical; but it is significant that he never could be prevailed upon to make a declamation."<sup>99</sup> Quite late in life, during his stay at Liverpool, Hawthorne finally accustomed himself to public speaking. After returning to America, he lapsed again into a native reticence. He preferred to listen at "The Saturday Club," though he might have been a center of attention had his disposition so inclined him.

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<sup>99</sup>Frank P. Stearns, Nathaniel Hawthorne (Boston, 1906), p. 69.

When Hawthorne did speak it was with a firmness not to be lightly discounted. "Alcott, who was his nearest neighbor at the Wayside, once remarked that there was only one will in the Hawthorne family, and that was Nathaniel's. His will was law and no one thought of disputing it."<sup>100</sup> During the engagement period, Hawthorne felt obligated to notify Sophia of the intractable nature of her beloved. "But I forewarn thee, sweetest Dove, that thy husband is a most unmanageable man;—thou art not to suppose, because his spirit answers to every touch of thine, that therefore every breeze, or even every whirlwind, can upturn him from his depths."<sup>101</sup> Hawthorne ruled his home with a tender firmness; he regulated his own life with a surer hand; but he did not seek to interfere in the life of his friends. He tended his own garden, guarded his fences, and never trampled his neighbor's land.

Throughout his lifetime, Hawthorne chronically complained of the hard work which writing necessitated. The smoothly flowing sentences to be found in published prose were not easily come by. "I hate all labor, but less that of the hands than of the head."(551) Yet Hawthorne never shirked mental efforts, and in the end he must have found them rewarding. As long as he was physically and mentally able, he could not stop writing—no matter how grating the task.

Could I have the freedom to be perfectly idle now--no duty to fulfil--no mental or physical labor to perform—I could be happy

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>101</sup>Love Letters, I, 158.

as a squash, and much in the same mode. But the necessity of keeping my brain at work eats into my comfort as the squash-bugs do into the heart of the vines.(552)

When, after the novelist's return from Europe, the ability to compose fiction left him, he was the first to realize his loss. There was much yet to be said; the same familiar ideas were haunting his mind--perhaps with a more disturbing vigor than ever before. While the practiced talent for graceful writing remained very much intact, Hawthorne had lost the knack of imbedding his thoughts in organized and significant narrative. Although he never lost his interest in people, his ability to create a living set of fictional characters was greatly shaken.

In his fiction, Hawthorne wrote about people. In life, he liked them in spite of the waywardness of human nature—which, after all, can not be remedied. "Unless people are more than commonly disagreeable, it is my foolish habit to contract a kindness for them."(553) Within his family, the attachment which the young Hawthorne held for his mother and sisters was undoubtedly tender. As a youth, he had written warmly of his mother. "Oh how I wish I was again with you, with nothing to do but go gunning. But the happiest days of my life are gone. Why was I not a girl that I might have been pinned all my life to my Mother's apron."<sup>102</sup> In later years, the accidental death of Louisa, the novelist's younger sister, was acknowledged as true tragedy.

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<sup>102</sup>Manning Hawthorne, "Nathaniel Hawthorne Prepares for College," New England Quarterly, XI, 70.

Hawthorne had perhaps a half dozen intimate friends: the political threesome of Bridge, Gilley and Pierce from college days; Bright during the period in England; Ticknor and Fields, his publishers, late in life. Among writers, Hawthorne formed close but not overly intimate friendships with Thoreau, Longfellow, and Melville. It is significant that the companionship of practical men like Franklin Pierce and Horatio Bridge was preferred to that of the Emerson and Alcott variety. "Pierce, Gilley, and Bridge were all born politicians, and it was this class of men with whom it would seem that Hawthorne naturally assimilated."<sup>103</sup> Neither a lifelong association with politically minded comrades, nor the salaried positions which Hawthorne obtained through his political friendships, were sufficient to promote a genuine interest in politics. Julian Hawthorne records a letter from his aunt which testifies to his father's characteristic apathy for political concerns. "In the evening we discussed political affairs, upon which we differed in opinion; he being a Democrat, and I of the opposite party. In reality, his interest in such things was so slight that I think nothing would have kept it alive but my contentious spirit."<sup>104</sup>

Rarely if ever did Hawthorne fail to make a striking and favorable impression on those who came to know him. Herman Melville had written to the effect that "I shall leave the world, I feel, with more satisfaction for having come to know you. Knowing you persuades

<sup>103</sup> Stearns, Hawthorne, p. 64.

<sup>104</sup> Julian Hawthorne, Hawthorne and His Wife, I, 125.

me more than the Bible of our immortality."<sup>105</sup> In the course of his lifetime, Hawthorne received more kindness from his friends than he could ever repay. Bridge, while remaining anonymous, had backed the publication of Hawthorne's first volume of short stories. Years later, Franklin Pierce had granted him the most choice of political windfalls--the Liverpool consulship. Both Ticknor and Pierce devoted themselves to the novelist in the year of his death. Ticknor, in fact, died quite unexpectedly while attempting to nurse Hawthorne back to health. The enthusiasm with which these friendships were held is not easily overstated. The respect which both friends and acquaintances accorded Hawthorne stands as a monument to his character.

"I wonder if ever, and how soon, I shall get a just estimate of how many jackasses there are in this ridiculous world." (554) People disappointed Hawthorne immensely. In spite of his fondness for individuals, the stupidity of the great mass of humanity was vexing. Indeed, the aristocratic side of Hawthorne's nature was prone to regard mankind as something of aumpkin. An open bitterness sometimes got the best of a native kindness. Perhaps the strangest one remark he ever made in this connection appears in a letter to Horace Conolly. "Certainly I must say it for myself, there is the least gall and animosity in my nature and the greatest and sweetest quantity of the milk of human kindness that ever existed in any son of Adam. I am a true Christian and the only one I ever met with."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>Rose Hawthorne Lathrop, Memories of Hawthorne (Boston, 1897), p. 159.

The renown which the romancer received never quite convinced him that his life was a success. It may be that the inability to solve problems rather than merely present them—the apparent impossibility of finding a set of tenable prescriptions—contributed to that feeling. "How strange that it should come now, when I may call myself famous, and prosperous!—when I am happy, too!—still that same dream of life hopelessly a failure!"(555) However much he wrote, however much he analyzed, the problems were still there. Writing helped to clarify them, but it could not remove them. While the transcendentalists were finding brighter and brighter answers, Hawthorne continued to depict the several aspects of the same dark, ancient problem.

"If each class would but keep within itself, and show its respect for itself by aiming at nothing beyond, they would all be more respectable. But this kind of fitness is evidently not to be expected in the future; and something else must be substituted for it."(556) Although Hawthorne believed in democracy and brotherhood as principles, his emotional temperament was not always in harmony with his ideal. It is possible that Hawthorne's aristocratic and frequently bigoted observations have a theoretical basis. If it is assumed that each individual has a designated function in an ordered world, then the overstepping of the limitations of that function—as was the habit of

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<sup>106</sup> Manning Hawthorne, "Hawthorne and the Man of God," Colophon, No. 2, II (Winter 1937), 281. Conolly was a slight acquaintance of whom Hawthorne was not overly fond.

"public women"—might well be interpreted as an insult to Providence. Moreover, it would constitute an unwarranted intrusion into the sphere of one's fellow mortals. Theoretical reasoning may partially account for these aristocratic leanings. Still, an aesthetic squeamishness—the same which railed against fat women—appears central to Hawthorne's very nature. "It is not good to see musicians, for they are usually coarse and vulgar people, and so the auditor loses faith in any fine and spiritual tones that they might breathe forth."(557)

Beneath the stern and decidedly formidable countenance which Hawthorne doubtless presented, the gentle quality was ever present. "Whoever has a kindness for me may be assured that I have twice as much for him."(558) When strangers appealed to his generosity, Hawthorne frequently aided them. He was always willing to help his friends. At the same time he was cold toward organized philanthropy. For the most part, the novelist strove to practice the principle of brotherhood in daily life. It is true enough, however, that the slave's plight failed to impress him; Hawthorne did not go along with the abolitionist in claiming the negro for a brother. Still, he was often moved to action by individual instances of distress.

When the Rev. Mr. Cheever was knocked down and flogged in the streets of Salem and then imprisoned, Hawthorne came out of his retreat and visited him regularly in jail, showing strong sympathy for the man and great indignation for those who had maltreated him.<sup>107</sup>

Money is always an immediate concern for a family man. "If I

<sup>107</sup>James T. Fields, Yesterday with Authors, p. 69.

were but a hundred times richer than I am, how very comfortable I could be."(559) For his own part, Hawthorne was not selfishly attached to those pleasures which money can buy. In one of Sophia's eulogistic tributes to her husband she points to his rather simple taste.

". . . he is as severe as a stoic about all personal comforts, and never in his life allowed himself a luxury.<sup>108</sup> Fortunately, Sophia was not the type of wife who pushes her husband onward to monetary goals. Nor was Hawthorne the type of husband who was easily pushed. "We are very happy, and have nothing to wish for except a better filled purse—and not improbably gold would bring trouble with it, at least my wife says so, and therefore exhorts me to be content with little."<sup>109</sup>

Writers can become quite disgusted with those readers who attack their literary productions out of bias and stupidity. The unfavorable criticisms which Hawthorne's writings on England provoked—and the novelist felt that he had represented the English fairly—irked him considerably. Hawthorne informed his publisher, Fields, of the disappointment he sometimes felt when confronted with such criticisms. "What a terrible thing it is to try to let off a little bit of truth into this miserable humbug of a world."(560) Man's social order, as well as the set of values upon which it rests, is so artificial in its make-up, and so indecently vain in its righteousness that it tends to

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<sup>108</sup> Julian Hawthorne, Hawthorne and His Wife, I, 372.

<sup>109</sup> Horatio Bridge, Personal Recollections, p. 90.

castigate truth. Hawthorne wrote what he felt to be the truth about life; it was not his custom to placate his reading public.

"What right have I to complain of any other man's foolish impulses, when I cannot possibly control my own?" (561) Although Hawthorne was temperate in his drinking and smoking habits, he was capable of unloosing a substantial oath upon the proper occasion. Horace Conolly was dismayed by Hawthorne's proficiency at swearing. Conolly and Hawthorne had just left Longfellow's company, when it became evident that the novelist was disturbed by the events of the meeting. "Hawthorne, if great in nothing else, was transcendently great in profanity and swearing, and on this occasion he gave full scope to his powers in this direction."<sup>110</sup> The point is that Hawthorne was not free from the typical characteristics of a robust male. He had been in slight trouble at college over gambling; he had a temper which occasionally got the best of him; he was quite fond of a cigar and a good drink; he had a discerning eye for comely maidens; and he was more than adequate as a profaner. In spite of the intellectual and artistic turn of his mind, Hawthorne was very much alive as a male animal. Although he took life quite seriously, he was scarcely a prude.

The fact that Hawthorne preferred the back seat to the rostrum is misleading. Only a steady and vigorous strength could carry a man through a twelve-year apprenticeship at his trade—especially when

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<sup>110</sup>Manning Hawthorne, "Hawthorne and the Man of God," Colophon, No. 2, II, 278.

neither money nor recognition were forthcoming from the outside world. Then, too, Hawthorne was no enthusiast; he lacked that zeal which sometimes sustains a man in the face of such odds. It can only be assumed that he was avidly concerned with writing of life as he understood it—not that he had a message to bring, but that he needed to find an expression for those shadows which peopled his mind.

That determined strength which kept Hawthorne at his pen stands in contrast to another side of his nature. An innate shyness was always present. Hawthorne did not desire to intrude his thoughts on others, nor did he invite advice from the outside world. "I have always hated to give advice, especially when there is a prospect of its being taken."(562) If the notion of an open brotherhood with man gripped his ideal longings, it was actualized only in a handful of friendships. It is doubtful that he talked over his inmost thoughts even within this intimate group.

Emotionally, Hawthorne was quite like other men. He was not especially moody and morose; he was certainly not a hermit in any true sense. If he was not talkative, persuasive, and dynamic, his infinite strength of character amply compensated for his reticence. Even though Hawthorne has been erroneously described as an emotional oddity by several of his biographers, he assuredly did not lack individuality. That individuality, that unique emotional equation which makes of each man an entity, relates definitely to Hawthorne's philosophy. Some men are more free from their emotions than others—Hawthorne evidences remarkable control in this respect—yet no man is totally free. It is

in a fusion of the mental and emotional constitution of a man that the total being emerges.

As writers fade into the past, their personalities are lost into time. Art replaces the man. Plato is no longer an individual; he is but a system of ideas. Whenever possible, it is desirable to know the emotional uniqueness of an artist as well as his mental pattern. In Hawthorne's case, the elements of his thought were given in detail, not always consciously, by the artist himself. His mental approach to life—though it deals frequently with what are normally thought of as intangibles—is notably clear. Whereas Hawthorne did not embrace all the aspects of living, he defined enough of them to elucidate quite specifically his mental equation—his orientation to life. Still, in drawing conclusions concerning that orientation, it is well to keep in mind the emotional being—though he is less well known than the mental one—for it is in synthesizing the two elements that the Hawthornian philosophy approaches completeness.

#### The Synthesis

An imaginative writer necessarily expresses his private interpretation of the society in which he finds himself; but some writers, Hawthorne among the number, are more concerned with depicting those phases of life which are present in varying degrees to all specific societies but limited to none. They probe, sometimes successfully, the very texture of life. Although these writers are somewhat restricted by the tenor of their own society, they advance beyond that restriction by portraying the seemingly eternal aspects of

existence.

Subjects with a limited application failed to challenge Hawthorne; only those universal situations which offered opportunity for a broad moral expansion truly interested him. Indeed, a reader of Hawthorne often suspects that the encountered fictional characters are personifications of ideas rather than mere people. Hawthorne began and ended with ideas. His notebooks are dotted with idea germs, many of which were later developed in fiction. It is in their art form, fiction, that these ideas reach their grandest actuality. Thus, while a study of Hawthorne's thought pattern is a world in and of itself, an application of that study to his writings provides a background—one in many ways superior to a biographical listing of the surface events of a man's life—against which the fiction may be better understood.

The Hawthornian thought pattern seemingly has no beginning, no middle period, and no end. It evolves by feeding itself on new observations, but that evolution consists of elaboration and solidification rather than change. An interpretation of the Hawthorne mind which would conveniently compartmentalize its development into different chronological periods has little basis in fact. Certainly the mind matured, but it advanced in an almost predetermined fashion. The overpowering oneness of Hawthorne's thought cannot be ignored. The changes which marriage and literary recognition brought about need not be minimized, but they were not of sufficient import to substantially alter the fundamental thought pattern. Those aspects of life which Hawthorne accentuated were set down with a thoroughgoing

consistency.

Sin does not exist as a latent or slumbering beast, but as an active and observable manifestation of the hard fact that it is not only native but central to all life. Coupled with the endless actuality of sin, which may nowise be evaded, the physical texture of life itself--the omnipresent marble and mud--prefaces and determines the possibilities of mortal life. If a writer disagreed with Hawthorne's primary assumption that evil exists--an assumption which Melville, for example, understood--there was scant likelihood of a meeting of the minds. Accordingly, Hawthorne was not comforted by the stirring messages of optimism current in his day. Nature, from which the Transcendentalists drew strength, held Hawthorne's attention not as a whispering of God, but as a hieroglyph of cold and unbending directional forces.

Man is never the shaper of his own universe, but rather the follower of a providentially assigned course. While from God's vantage point the individual mortal functions as an infinitesimal fraction of an over-all program, from man's limited view, life approaches chaos. Especially is this true when man seeks to shape the life materials to his own liking, or when he anywise attempts to move contrary to his allotted destiny. The fact that man can neither see nor comprehend providential guidance does not lessen its absolute power.

Thus, the life pattern with which man must ever contend is harshly constituted of sin, the physical compound, death, and an

insensitive and often, from man's point of view, brutal providence. Providence, while it is ultimately and necessarily good, since it is the activation of God's divine plan, appears quite malignant in individual instances. Man's best program—in fact the only intelligent program which may be followed in the light of the undeniable and unchangeable conditions into which he is born—should begin with a resignation to the actual substance of life. Within that limitation it behooves man to act out his role to the full extent of his capabilities. Earthly life, then, is a maturing pilgrimage—normally a solemn one. While the life pattern exists in all its grayness, there are other aspects of the total scheme yet to be considered. Although they do not supersede or deny that grayness, they do provide a temporary relief.

Society requires man to participate as a member of the group; thus the social force is of inescapable concern throughout earthly life. Though sensitive and solitary persons rebel against that participation, they arrive nowhere, as in the experience of Thoreau at Walden, by separating themselves from mankind. The wiser course is to accept the social order regardless of its artificiality. The slight pleasures which it may afford are preferable to the iciness of isolation. In truth, it is only as man functions within the group that he may be said to exist.

The manner in which Hawthorne arrived at his religion is debatable. His faith in God may have its origin in the recognition that the actual texture of life demands an eventual balancing. In

other words, out of a felt need for order, Hawthorne may have evolved a supreme deity. More probably, he held a conventional and unquestioning faith in God—one directly intuited—one which was far more than a rationalized creation of his own intellect. Third, it is possible that the spotty and shadowy beauties of this life led Hawthorne to recognize the existence of that spirituality of which they were but imperfect glimmerings. Regardless of the reasons behind Hawthorne's religion—and it is not certain that the novelist himself could have stated them—his faith was as pure and as permanent as was his belief in evil. It is only in the immortal state that man finds a fully matured "reality"—that he is no longer limited by the physical compound. But that life, while it is certain, is far in the future; it is beyond man's primary concern—his own imperfect world. The religion to which Hawthorne adhered did not permit man to function as a noble microcosm of God; instead, it led to limited and imperfect actions beneath the inscrutable guidance of a divine will.

Hawthorne's mind was not carried forward by the external murmurings of life. Wars, elections, the headline events of the day, failed to intrigue him, for he was thoroughly magnetized by those "realities" which remain stable beneath eruptive surfaces. From this pattern, which grows more manifest with each additional glance at the life scene, man has no permanent relief. For creatures of this earth only partial pleasures are available. In proposing a domestic relationship founded upon love, Hawthorne forwards an ideal which observable life never quite attains. Womanhood and art are envisioned

in a pure and untrammeled state. In their highest respective developments, both give evidence of ethereal or spiritual beauty. In this world, however, man is limited to imperfect and corrupted representations of the ideal. Hence, mortal life is a disappointment—a depressant—in that what is stands as a glaring contrast to what ought to be.

Again and again, Hawthorne returns to his characteristic conception of human nature. Man is born with a stigma which he is powerless to rectify. His primal nature is not only deficient in goodness and nobility, it is active in its appetite for evil. Although the brute in man may be constrained by gentle forces, it remains latently present. What passes for sin may be little more than an abandonment of man to his primitive nature.

While man's mind provides a distinguishing mark from the lower animals, it is the heart rather than the mind which makes of man an immortal being. Unfortunately, human nature operates too often on the premise that man's intellect has a divinity all its own. Despite the nature of humanity, Hawthorne cherished a faint hope for an eventual brotherhood of the heart. He did not proffer brotherhood in the manner of an evangelist offering salvation to sinners. Indeed, there is no panacea for mortal ills. Religion, even though it is a consoling medium, does not mitigate the physical hardness of life. Art and women, though they are definite forces for good, are at best partially effective in providing moments of release from the ever-present pattern. A state of brotherhood is now, and probably

always will be, a dream of the future; for man's very nature forbids its coming. A man may find comfort only by contenting himself with life's limitations.

Hawthorne's inconsistencies, though extremely rare, are understandable, for truth itself is many-sided. He seems to have seen life in amazingly clear outlines. He is pessimistic, almost cynical, in regard to man's efforts to alter the course which life has followed since time began. Yet Hawthorne was confident that man would move into a better realm upon death. The pattern for mortal life, however, is invariably interlaced with evil.

Hawthorne's philosophy of life has no axe to grind. It crusades neither for nor against specific theories. When the novelist criticizes vanity, hypocrisy, and artificiality, he does so in terms of a "reality" which he had come to know through a long and imaginative study of the life scene. He merely states his private interpretation of life. If anyone had referred to Hawthorne as a philosopher, no doubt he would have shuddered. While Hawthorne's personal philosophy may not be great thought in and of itself, while Hawthorne is little renowned for his ideas, still that philosophy has a lasting significance in that it presents clearly and completely that orientation to life which found itself so richly manifest in his fiction.

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## APPENDIX

### CITATION OF PRIMARY SOURCES

The quotations used as the primary source for this book are identified here. First is given the standard footnote entry; second, the title of the novel or short story if the quotation is taken from Hawthorne's fiction; third, the date of first publication. Yearly dates are given for statements quoted from the letters and the notebooks. The abbreviation ibid. is used with the Works only when the story or novel is the same as the one given in the preceding footnote; ibid. is used with the notebooks and letters, but the date is given if it is not the same as in the preceding footnote.

## CHAPTER I

## SIN

The Nature of Sin

- (1) Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Complete Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne (Boston, 1882), I, 345 ("The Haunted Mind," 1835). All references are to the 1882 edition, the Riverside edition, which will hereafter be cited as Works.
- (2) Works, IX, 43 (The American Note-Books, 1836).
- (3) Works, I, 250 ("Fancy's Show Box," 1837).
- (4) Works, III, 590 ("John Inglefield's Thanksgiving," 1840).
- (5) Randall Stewart, ed., The American Note-Books by Nathaniel Hawthorne (New Haven, 1932), p. 186 (1843). This volume will hereafter be cited as Stewart, American Notebooks. The 1882 edition of The American Note-Books is cited only when it contains passages which Stewart was forced to omit for lack of an original manuscript.
- (6) Works, II, 286 ("The New Adam and Eve," 1843).
- (7) Works, V, 241 (The Scarlet Letter, 1850).
- (8) Ibid., V, 253.
- (9) Works, III, 276 (The House of the Seven Gables, 1851).
- (10) Works, X, 451 (The French and Italian Note-Books, 1858).

Brotherhood in Sin

- (11) Works, I, 257 ("Fancy's Show Box," 1837).
- (12) Randall Stewart, "Hawthorne and Politics: Unpublished Letters to William B. Pike," New England Quarterly, V (April 1932), 254 (from a letter, 1853).
- (13) Works, VI, 208 (The Marble Faun, 1860).
- (14) Ibid., VI, 247.

Concealed Sin

- (15) Works, II, 244 ("The Procession of Life," 1843).
- (16) Works, II, 377 ("Feathertop: A Moralized Legend," 1844).
- (17) Works, V, 177 (The Scarlet Letter, 1850).
- (18) Ibid., V, 258.
- (19) Works, VI, 210 (The Marble Faun, 1860).

The Devil and Evil

- (20) Works, II, 100 ("Young Goodman Brown," 1835).
- (21) Ibid., II, 102.
- (22) Works, V, 500 (The Blithedale Romance, 1852).

The Transmission of Sin

- (23) Works, III, 147 (The House of the Seven Gables, 1851).
- (24) Ibid., III, 36.

Sin and Purity

- (25) Works, I, 34 ("Sunday at Home," 1837).
- (26) Works, VI, 441 (The Marble Faun, 1860).
- (27) Ibid., VI, 439.
- (28) Ibid., VI, 375.
- (29) Ibid., VI, 289.
- (30) Ibid., VI, 375.
- (31) Ibid., VI, 238.
- (32) Works, XI, 33 (The Dolliver Romance, 1864).

The Effects of Sin

- (33) Works, I, 524 ("Edward Fane's Rosebud," 1837).

- (34) Works, V, 180 (The Scarlet Letter, 1850).
- (35) Ibid., V, 103.
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(440) Works, I, 483 ("Night Sketches," 1838).

(441) Works, V, 18 (The Scarlet Letter, 1850).

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## CHAPTER IX

### NATIONAL NATURES

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- (458) Samuel Longfellow, Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, II, 287 (from a letter, 1855).
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#### The Scots

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#### The French

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#### The Italians

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#### The Americans

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#### Similarity of Natures

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## CHAPTER X

## PROGRESS, REFORM, BROTHERHOOD, AND WAR

## I

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- (524) Works, V, 480 (The Blithedale Romance, 1852).
- (525) Works, XII, 417 (The Life of Franklin Pierce, 1852).
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The Lack of Brotherhood

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- (540) Stewart, English Notebooks, p. 277 (1856).
- (541) Works, XIII, 56 (Dr. Grimshawe's Secret, 1863).

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## WAR

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## CHAPTER XI

## THE SYNTHESIS

## The Emotional Equation

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VITA

The author was born in Nashville, Tennessee, on October 11, 1926. He received his secondary education in Nashville, and then entered the University of Alabama in 1944 under the Army Specialized Training Program. During World War II, he enlisted in the Army and served abroad for eighteen months in the Philippines and in Japan.

Upon discharge from the service in 1946, he entered Vanderbilt University at Nashville, Tennessee, where he received his B. A. with a major in English in 1949 and his M. A. in 1950.

In September of 1950, he began graduate work in English at the University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida. During the three years of study at Florida, he held a graduate assistantship and a fellowship from the University of Florida for work in English.

Beginning in September 1953, he will be a member of the English faculty at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, Virginia.

This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the chairman of the candidate's supervisory committee and has been approved by all members of the committee. It was submitted to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate Council and was approved as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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C. F. Byers

Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

J. E. McIntire

Dean, Graduate School

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